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THE CHINESE KITTEN



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EDNA A. BROWN



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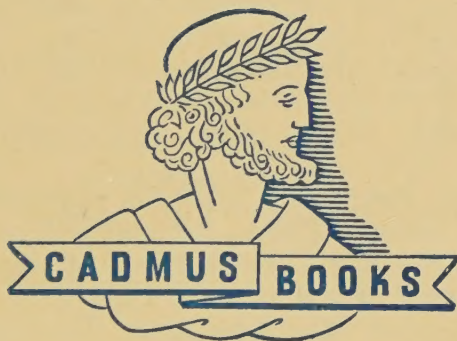
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THE CHINESE KITTEN

BY EDNA A. BROWN

Author of *The Silver Bear*

When Father said they could go to the beach for a whole week, Dora and Lucy thought they were the happiest girls in the world. But when they found that they could also sleep in a tent on the beach, then they **knew** they were the happiest—and the luckiest. Everything went fine and they had a lot of fun until Arcturus disappeared. Then Dora was nearly heart-broken.

Nothing ever quite took his place until she got the Chinese kitten. Before that happened, however, she and Lucy had lots of good times. For instance, there was the time they went to Boston to visit Miss Chandler. That visit was packed with all kinds of fun—the swan boats, the big library, the folding bed, the marionettes, the squirrels in the park, and the brand new babies.

Then in the fall there was Columbus Day and Halloween and Thanksgiving and—most glorious of all—Christmas. All these things were fun, but the Chinese kitten was the most fun of all. And why should the Chinese kitten mean so much to Dora and Lucy? It wasn't an ordinary sort of kitten at all, but when you read the book you will understand why it was so important.



THE CHINESE KITTEN

BY
EDNA A BROWN

ILLUSTRATED BY
ANTOINETTE INGLIS

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The Chinese Kitten

CHAPTER I

THE SURPRISE

“**I** THINK,” said Lucy Merrill in a whisper to her sister Dora, “that Uncle Dan has a surprise for us.”

Dora was industriously setting the table for supper. Lucy, at the kitchen dresser, was peeling peaches. Lucy had on a big apron belonging to her mother, and it covered both her and the stool on which she sat. Dora wore a pink apron over her checked pink-and-white dress, and Dora’s apron was just like the big one, only the right size.

Lucy owned a proper-sized apron also, but Lucy had been unlucky enough to upset the blueing bottle when she took a dish from the

kitchen closet. Her apron wasn't hurt a bit, but Mrs. Merrill had rinsed it out and now it was flapping on the line in the back yard. The closet floor was bluer than the apron and not so easy to wash.

"What makes you think there is a surprise?" asked Dora, standing back from the table to see whether she had remembered everything that anybody could use during supper. No, she had forgotten the pulverized sugar for the peaches.

"Because," said Lucy, "he keeps following Mother everywhere she goes, and I know he is teasing her to do something. I heard him say something about the beach."

Dora stopped in the pantry doorway, her eyes big and blue. "Do you think we can be going to the beach?" she asked eagerly.

"My, I hope so!" said Lucy. "We haven't been away this summer. And Father

said last night that the press was going to shut down for the week after Labor Day."

Dora looked out of the window across the street at the low brick building where Father Merrill worked in the printing office.

"We had better not ask too many questions," she said wisely. "Perhaps Uncle Dan is going to take us to White Beach for a day. But we did go to the vacation school, Lucy, and that was a great deal of fun."

"It was," agreed Lucy. "And it cost a dollar a week. But just one day at the beach would be lovely. I wish the Sunday-school picnic had gone there."

Dora didn't agree with Lucy. That annual picnic had been held at World's End Pond. Even the salt water could not be nicer than that place.

Just as Lucy finished the last peach, Mrs. Merrill came in. Dora brought the sugar-bowl

from the pantry and looked hard at her mother. Sometimes it was possible to tell by Mother's face how she felt about things.

Mrs. Merrill did not seem disturbed, but neither did she look as though she was thinking of anything especially pleasant. She put the rest of the supper on the table and told Lucy to call her father and Uncle Dan.

It was Uncle Dan who told the secret. Right in the middle of supper he turned to his sister.

"You know, Molly," he began, "Jack says I may have his tent and we should need only one."

"*Dan!*" said Mother Merrill, and everybody was still. The children looked at Uncle Dan. Then Father Merrill laughed.

"A tent!" shrieked Lucy. Dora jumped right out of her chair and ran around the table to her uncle.

"Are we going, too?" she asked quite breathlessly. "Can I sleep in a tent? I never did, you know."

Mr. Merrill laughed again, and this time Dan laughed with him.

"You've done it now, Dan," said his sister. "You may as well tell them."

But Uncle Dan didn't explain. "Oh, Molly, then you *will* go?" he asked as eagerly as the little girls.

"I suppose I shall have to," said Mrs. Merrill, but she didn't look as though she would find it very hard work.

"What is it? What is it?" Dora was asking with her arms around her young uncle's neck.

"Quit choking me," said Dan. "Go back and eat your supper."

Dora gave him one last hard hug before returning to her chair. "I know it is nice," she

said. "But is it the beach, Uncle Dan, and are we to sleep in a tent?"

"Maybe," said Dan.

"The press is going to shut down for a week," said Mrs. Merrill, "and Dan can get off, too. He wants to go over to White Beach. There's a little shack we can have for not much money, but it has only two rooms. Dan thinks he can bunk on the porch. He wants Olive Gates to go with us, and she and you children would have to sleep in the tent."

"I wouldn't be scared if Olive was with us," said Lucy. Dora was too happy to say anything at all. Her eyes shone and looked bluer than ever. When one is only eight, there are a great many important things in life. To go to the beach and to sleep in a tent seemed almost too good to be true.

"Alice Harper is at the beach this summer, but she sleeps in a house," said Lucy. No-

body was listening. Dan and Mr. Merrill were both talking, and it was plain that they wanted to go just as much as the children did.

“What shall we do with Timmy?” asked Dora, a sudden cloud coming over her face. It would never do to leave the tiger-striped pussy to take care of himself for a week. “Can he go with us?”

“No,” said Mrs. Merrill. “He would be scared to death, if he didn’t run away entirely.”

Dora looked so distressed that Mr. Merrill could not stand it. “We’ll plan for Timmy,” he said kindly. “I never did think much of people who go off for a vacation and leave their cats to take care of themselves. We will leave the key of the house with Jim Baker, and ask his little girl to come over twice a day to feed Timmy and to let him into the kitchen every night if he wants to sleep inside. But these nice nights, Timmy may prefer to stay out.”

Dora's face looked bright again. Of course she could not enjoy the beach if Timmy were not cared for. He was used to being petted and fed regularly. Now there was not a cloud in her sky.

Uncle Dan was as pleased as the little girls. He talked much more than usual during supper, and after it was over and the dishes were being washed, he came to where his sister was mixing bread.

"All right for me to ask Olive?" he inquired.

"Yes," said Mrs. Merrill, smiling a little. "Tell her we all want her to go with us."

Dan was off in a hurry, but before he went he gave his sister an awkward hug.

Never were dishes done with such speed! Mrs. Merrill looked at them suspiciously but did not say a word. Lucy had washed them properly and Dora had wiped them as dry as

could be, even though they worked so fast. And yet neither of them knew why they were hurrying. They were not to go to the beach for three days, not until Saturday.

There was plenty to do between then and the end of the week. First, they had to decide what clothes to take, and were surprised to find that Mother did not think as they did about the dresses. She came and looked at them when Lucy and Dora had laid them out on their bed.

“You won’t need your good clothes,” she said. “Those must be kept for school. You will be playing on the beach all day, and not need to be dressed up. When we go over, you will have on one good dress apiece, and that is enough.”

Lucy and Dora were disappointed. They thought that people who went away on a vacation should take *all* their best clothes.

“ But not people who live in tents,” said Mrs. Merrill. “ That makes a great difference. We are only going to camp, you know.”

“ But I may take Arcturus?” Dora begged, bringing from her bureau the little silver bear on her neck-chain, the bear which had been named for a star. “ Arcturus does really need sea air, Mother.”

“ He looks as though he were pining away,” said Mrs. Merrill, but she said that on the way over Dora might wear the necklace.

After Mother had edited that collection of clothes, Lucy and Dora packed them very easily into one suit-case. When they considered that this was to be a camping-trip, it was fun to see how much one could get on without.

Then there was the question of food. Mother made a great many cookies, both of sugar and molasses, and shut them into tin boxes. She also made some cake.

On Friday a pleasant thing happened. The man who owned the printing-press where Mr. Merrill was foreman, said that he would have all their things taken over to the beach in the delivery truck belonging to the press. There would be room on the driver's seat for Mr. and Mrs. Merrill. The little girls could sit on the soft baggage in the back of the truck.

This made it very easy to take whatever they wished. Mrs. Merrill wrapped up some more blankets and made some more cake. She also filled a basket with apples.

Though they were expecting to find it great fun, Lucy and Dora did not ride on the back of the truck. Jack Simmons, who lent Uncle Dan his tent, had a little Ford car. He offered to take Olive and Uncle Dan and the two children. He would stay and help Uncle Dan pitch the tent.

It was important to have a pleasant day on

Saturday. All Friday afternoon, while they were doing the last things, Lucy and Dora kept looking at the sky. Their looking did not seem to make any difference, for it did not become more blue, nor any less so, no matter how hard they gazed.

One of the very last things was to go to the Public Library and choose some books to take with them. For, as Mrs. Merrill said, it might rain at the beach, and then they would be glad of something to read.

The children did not wish to think of rain, but they chose the library books with great care. Lucy decided to take "What Katy Did," but Dora could not find any book which seemed suited to so important an occasion. Finally she asked the librarian, Miss Perkins, to choose one for her.

When Miss Perkins knew that the story must last a week and was to be read at the

beach, she agreed that no ordinary book would do. She went to a shelf in the back of the library and brought Dora the "Story of Doctor Dolittle."

"You will like this book very much, Dora," she said. "And I think your Uncle Dan will like it, too. It is a new book, just put into the library, so you will take very good care of it, won't you?"

"Oh, I will!" said Dora, who had caught sight of the funny pictures in the text. "I will be very careful of it, Miss Perkins."

"And is Arcturus going to the beach with you?" asked Miss Perkins as she slipped "Doctor Dolittle" into an envelope for safe traveling.

Dora explained that Arcturus would benefit from sea air, and Miss Perkins at once said that it would do him good.

CHAPTER II

AT THE BEACH

THE house where the Merrills lived in Westmore was a brown cottage, but it seemed large and like a palace when the children saw the shack at the beach. Still, they liked the shack very much.

The front room had a couch and chairs, and a square table which could be used for eating. There was one wee bedroom and the smallest kitchen ever seen. That kitchen was hardly so large as a good-sized cupboard. Mrs. Merrill could stand in its centre and reach everything on all four walls. It contained a little sink and an oil stove and some dishes,—not a great many dishes, but that made fewer to wash.

The shack stood on a hard sandy ridge, not near any other house. Behind, the sand sloped

to a road where automobiles were always passing. In front there was sand that slid around under foot, and then a broad hard beach and the wonderful ocean. When the children came on that sunny Saturday, for it was sunny in spite of all their watching the sky, the sea was a deep blue, with white fringes on the shore, where the waves ran up and then slid back again. The sand looked grayish-green, but when the water touched it, it turned shiny.

Dora could not take her eyes off the ocean. She forgot that she had wished to see Uncle Dan and Jack Simmons put up the tent. They pitched it near the shack, on the south side, and drove the poles and the pegs in just as hard as they could hammer them, so that the wind would not loosen the ropes.

When the tent was up, Dora and Lucy went inside. They pulled up all the beach peas growing in the enclosed space, so there was

only a floor of warm dry sand, soft and fine. Mrs. Merrill had brought on the truck some rag rugs. These were spread on the clean sand and the legs of the cots put on the rugs. If this were not done, a cot might tumble down when somebody was asleep on it.

Between the tent poles Uncle Dan stretched a rope. This was for Olive and the little girls to hang their clothes over. There was not much room left when the three cots had been set up and a chair brought from the house to hold a wash-bowl and pitcher, but Lucy and Dora thought it was beautiful.

“We will keep our suit-cases under the beds,” said Olive. “And we must be careful not to lose little things in this sand.”

It took only a few minutes to get settled in the tent. Lucy and Dora put on some old rompers they had brought for bathing dresses. Olive put on her pretty blue suit and tied a

blue handkerchief around her hair. Dora thought she looked extremely nice. She decided that when she was twenty, like Olive, she would have a blue jersey bathing suit. But meantime she liked her rompers very well.

Such a wonderful beach that was! There were not many shells to pick up, but a great many interesting pebbles. Almost immediately the children found a strange creature, shaped like a horse's hoof, but transparent and with a long, sharp tail. It seemed quite dead and Dora was glad that it was. She really would not like to meet it strolling down the beach. Olive laughed and said that it was a horseshoe crab and would not do her any harm.

Quite soon, Father and Mother Merrill and Uncle Dan came out, dressed to go into the sea. Lucy and Dora waded in to their waists, squealing because the water was so cold. But

in just a few minutes it did not seem cold at all, and they wanted to stay in all day.

Mother would not let them. Much sooner than they wished, she told them to go out and dress.

“ It won’t do to stay too long the first time,” she said. “ Put on your old gingham and you may go barefooted and wade all you like, but you have been in the water long enough for to-day.”

It seemed hard to come out when Uncle Dan and Olive were still jumping waves and even diving through them, but it would be fun to go without shoes or stockings and to run into the edge of the water whenever they wished. Besides, Mother herself came out when they did.

Lucy and Dora dressed quickly. They hung their wet clothes on a line which Mother stretched from the corner of the shack to the

rear tent pole. Something was cooking on the oil stove which smelled very good.

“When will dinner be ready?” asked Lucy.

“I am as hungry as can be.”

“It will be ready before the others are dressed,” said her mother. “I wish they would come out.”

Strange to say, Uncle Dan was willing to leave the ocean before Olive. Father Merrill grew cold and waded ashore, but Olive did not look cold at all. It was Uncle Dan who seemed shivery and whose lips turned blue. Olive ran into the tent and presently threw out her suit. Dora hung it on the line, after brushing off what sand she could manage.

What a funny dinner that was! Nobody had more than one spoon, and some of the spoons were not a size any one would choose to eat with. There were just forks enough to

go around and Lucy and Dora had to share a knife. But this was only the more sport.

Olive's hair was wet and tied with a ribbon, so she looked like a little girl with it hanging down her back. There were not chairs for everybody, and Uncle Dan sat on an old crate which kept cracking and acting as though it were going to break and let him down on the floor. But Dan didn't care if it did.

"Alice Palmer lives in a house somewhere at this beach," said Lucy contentedly. "It is much more fun to camp."

After dinner Mrs. Merrill told them all to go down on the beach and she would wash the dishes.

"We will do nothing of the kind," said Olive. "You got dinner alone and I shall wash the dishes myself and the children will wipe them. You will not be allowed in the kitchen, Molly Merrill, and indeed, there is not

room for anybody but Lucy and Dora and me."

"Well!" said Mrs. Merrill, and she put on her hat and went down to the edge of the water with Father Merrill.

There was no can for the garbage, so Olive gave the dish to Uncle Dan and told him to take it down the beach away from all the houses and dig a hole and bury it.

"What for?" asked Dan. "Why not throw it out for the gulls to eat?"

Olive said he was not to do this. The gulls might not eat it immediately and the flies would collect and it would be unpleasant for people who were passing. It must be buried, and quite deep at that.

Lucy and Dora were amused to see Uncle Dan go off to bury the garbage just as Olive said. But she looked so pretty with her wavy hair tied back with the blue ribbon that it

was no wonder Uncle Dan did what he was told.

For dinner, they had used every dish in the shack, except one big and very black kettle, but even then it did not take long to wash them. Just for fun, Lucy and Dora counted as they wiped. There were precisely forty-three dishes, and that included all the spoons and knives and forks.

“Now,” said Olive as they finished, “don’t you think it would be nice to have sandwiches for supper and eat them on the beach?”

Lucy and Dora both thought it would be an excellent plan.

“Then let’s go and ask your mother,” said Olive. “Because if she is willing, we will make the sandwiches right now, and then we shall not have anything to do for supper except eat it.”

Olive and the little girls ran a race to see

which would first reach Mrs. Merrill. Lucy won, because her legs were longer than Dora's and, anyway, Dora wasn't trying very hard to beat Olive.

Mrs. Merrill approved of the sandwiches. She said that Olive might plan supper exactly as she liked. So they ran back to the shack.

By this time Uncle Dan had buried the garbage and he helped make the sandwiches. Some were filled with peanut butter and some with orange marmalade. Olive also boiled six eggs, one for each. She wrapped the sandwiches in waxed paper, and put them in a basket covered with a damp cloth. She put in the eggs and the salt and the pepper, and a loaf of cake and a knife to cut it with. She put in some peaches and some paper napkins.

"Our supper is ready," she announced. "All we have to do is to come for the basket when we want to eat."

Uncle Dan wanted to walk up the beach to see the life-saving station. Olive's hair was dry now, so she twisted it up and pinned on a pretty hat made of blue silk ribbon. They invited the little girls to go, but both preferred to play in the sand.

Lucy took a big spoon from the kitchen to dig a well, but Dora planned to collect shiny white and gray-green pebbles and make a house for herself. This she did by outlining the walls with pebbles and leaving spaces for doors and windows. The beach was so wide that there was room for a large house. Quite soon Lucy came and began to make herself a house next door to Dora's.

To build the house took a long time, but just as it was finished, Dora had a visitor. The tide was coming, and the first she knew, old Father Ocean ran right in through her front door without even so much as knocking! He did

not stay, but ran promptly out again, leaving wet marks all over the front hall of Dora's new house.

Dora did not say anything then, but the next time a big wave rushed up, the water came into her parlor and curled about her bare toes.

"I shall have to move," she said to Lucy.

"Or go away until to-morrow," suggested Lucy. "Look! How low the sun is."

Where *had* that afternoon gone? It did not seem as though they had been playing more than a few minutes. But the sea was growing gray instead of blue, and the sun struck long level lines through the air. Up by the shack Father and Mother were enjoying themselves; Mother sitting quite idle, just looking at the water; Father lying on his back in the sand. Away down the beach Olive and Uncle Dan were coming. It must be time for that picnic supper.

CHAPTER III

ABOUT ARCTURUS

LUCY and Dora thought it was great fun to go to bed in the tent. They were even willing to undress at their usual hour and not tease to be out on the moonlit beach.

The only place to put their clothes was over the rope Uncle Dan had stretched between the poles. They hung them there, and the clothes immediately slid into a heap in the middle of the rope. Dora could not make hers stay neatly at one end.

Olive did not go to bed with the children. She and Uncle Dan took the trolley car which ran along the road behind the shack and went to another beach where there was a Saturday night dance. Lucy and Dora did not mind.

The window of the room where Father and Mother were to sleep was close at the end of the tent.

After Mother had tucked them into their cots, Lucy went quickly to sleep but Dora lay with eyes wide open. Because of the moon the tent was bright, and through its open flaps she could see the waves breaking lazily on the shore, and hear the surge of the water. Across from the moon came a path of light.

For quite a long time Dora watched the sparkles and then suddenly she began to think about bears, not tiny silver bears like Arcturus, but real ones, full-sized and covered with hair. This was not a pleasant thought.

Dora knew there were no bears anywhere near White Beach. Still, it seemed possible that one *might* walk into that open tent. And then she heard a rustle outside.

Dora gave a little gasp. At first, she

thought she would call Mother, but she remembered that she had wanted to sleep in the tent and that doing so was a part of camping. To be sure, she had not expected that Lucy would be asleep when she wasn't.

After that first gasp, Dora decided not to scream. She lay still, and listened hard. In a minute, a cricket began to chirp.

When she heard the cricket, Dora felt much better. It surely would not be chirping if a bear were walking round the tent. It would not dare to make any noise. But she thought it would be comforting to have Arcturus for a bed-fellow.

The suit-case was under Lucy's cot, so Dora got up and pulled it into the moonlight. Without any trouble she found the silver bear on his slender chain and snapped it about her neck. Then she went back to bed and did not think any longer about real bears.

Instead, she thought of fairies and of a poem she had once read in a library book. She tried hard to remember how it went.

“When the moon shines bright on the pebbly beach
And the sea is half-asleep;
Heaving, heaving, evermore,
And the surf falls lazily along the shore,
And the whispering ripples creep.
Then the wet little fairies come out of the waves
And dance in the light of the moon.
With gossamer dresses of white sea-foam,
Brown seaweed sash and coral comb,
And spottled shells for shoon.”

While Dora was thinking about the poetry, she watched the edge of the sea and thought she saw one fairy creep out and shake the spray from its wings. She wasn't quite sure, for it might have been a sandpiper. When Olive came in softly, about midnight, Dora was as sound asleep as Lucy.

Next morning, the sun touched Dora's cot rather than either of the others, just as the

moon had done. When she opened her eyes, the sun was just above the horizon, its lower rim not clear from the water. Never before had she seen it so tremendous! It looked a perfect elephant of a sun.

A soft little breeze came into the tent, blowing straight from sea. Sandpipers really were running along the edge of the foam and the beach was washed hard and smooth. Not a trace was left of Dora's house except a huddle of the larger pebbles. Every footmark was gone. A perfectly new and fresh playground lay before them.

Just then Lucy woke and she and Dora looked at the sunrise sky and talked in whispers because Olive was still asleep. Her hand was tucked under one cheek, and a long braid of hair lay across her pillow.

They decided to get up and dress very quietly. It was easy to be quiet because the

sand under foot muffled every step, and easy to be quick because they had very few clothes to put on.

Just as they were dressed, Lucy stopped short. "O my!" she said in a whisper, and stood on one foot.

Twisted about her bare toes was a little silver chain.

Dora looked at it. Then she put her hand to her neck. Arcturus and his leash were gone. That was her silver chain tangled in Lucy's toes, but where was the bear? She gave a frightened sob, which woke Olive.

Olive sat up in her cot and looked from one to the other. "What's the matter?" she asked.

Between sobs, Dora explained that she had felt lonely after Lucy went to sleep and had taken Arcturus into bed with her. When she awoke, she never thought of him. There was the chain, but where was Arcturus?

Olive got up at once. She put on her kimono and her slippers. Then she took the top blanket from her bed and spread it carefully on the sand. Next, she took Dora's blankets and shook them carefully over hers. If Arcturus were hiding in the bed, he must come out. But he did not.

Olive shook Dora's pillow and her mattress and her nightdress, and felt the pockets of her dress and looked in the suit-case. She emptied the suit-case and shook every garment. Trying not to cry, Dora watched Olive and Lucy helped her. But Arcturus was not anywhere.

"I am afraid he is in the sand," said Olive. "Show me just where you have walked since you got up."

"I have been right by my cot except when I washed myself," choked Dora.

Olive felt all about in the sand by Dora's bed and sifted it through her fingers. Then

she sat back against the cot, for she really did not know what else to do. She was very sorry for Dora, and Dora knew it. She crept into Olive's arms and cried softly, so as not to wake the people in the shack.

Arcturus had certainly run away, but after her cry Dora felt better. Lucy and Olive both were hugging her tightly and though it was hard to lose her dear bear, she still had those who loved her.

"Perhaps we shall find him yet," said Olive. "Let's think so, Dora, and don't let it spoil your nice time at the beach. Perhaps Dan will know something more to do. Perhaps Arcturus has just gone to be a sand-bear for a little while."

At this Dora smiled through her tears. She kissed Olive. Of course it would not be right to spoil things by being sad, and she would hope for the best. There might be a worse

fate for Arcturus than being a jolly little sand-bear.

So they all got up from the rag rugs and Lucy picked up Olive's pretty rose-trimmed hat which had slipped from the nail where she tried to hang it.

"You might put that under my cot, Lucy," said Olive. "It won't stick on that nail, and I don't believe I shall wear it here. I like my ribbon one better for the beach."

Lucy tucked the hat under Olive's bed and then she and Dora went down on the shore. Olive said that she knew it would be hard for Dora to speak about Arcturus, so she would do it for her. She would ask the others not to say very much about him, only to look for him everywhere they went.

This made it easier for Dora to come to breakfast. She could even smile when they all called her Theodora. Usually, only

Mother remembered that on Sundays she wished to have her whole name used. This morning even Uncle Dan thought about it.

The tide was going out, and away to the right were some shining mud-flats. Uncle Dan and Olive said they were going to dig clams and Lucy and Dora went with them to pick up the clams after they were dug. There was only one clam-fork, but Mr. Merrill found an old spade which he thought he could use. They all put on their bathing suits.

When Dora reached the clam-flat, she did not like it very well. She had not known that clams chose to live in such queer mud. It seemed much dirtier than ordinary wet earth, and after Dora and Lucy had sunk into it far above their ankles, they told Olive that they would let her pick up the clams. If she needed help, she might call, and they would come, but

it did not look as though three people would be needed to collect clams for Father and Uncle Dan.

Olive thought she could manage all the clams, so Lucy and Dora went back to the hard beach and made some more houses. Lucy's had a great many large rooms and long halls with plenty of windows. Dora made a small one which was just like the brown cottage she lived in on Main Street.

Father and Uncle Dan heard what Olive and the children were saying about the clams, and so they dug very hard and very fast. The clams were not so many that Olive needed help to pick them up, but there were plenty for a chowder and for steaming, which was much more than either she or Mrs. Merrill had expected. They decided to have the steamed clams for dinner and to make the chowder for supper.

When the clams were dug, Mr. Merrill carried the basket home and Lucy and Dora saw Uncle Dan and Olive coming up the beach. Olive was carrying a heavy shovel and Uncle Dan had a queer-looking thing over his shoulder. Even when he came up to the shack the children did not know what the thing could be. It was a large oblong frame of wood, with a wire screen bottom, and was tilted up on one end.

“We are going to look for Arcturus,” said Olive, as Uncle Dan dumped the frame beside the tent. “Some men have been getting gravel from the ridge and using this. We have borrowed it for a little while.”

Neither Lucy nor Dora could guess how this frame was to help find the silver bear. Uncle Dan and Olive took out of the tent the three cots and the single chair. Olive shook each rag rug carefully.

Then Uncle Dan carried the frame into the tent. He set it up and lifted a shovelful of sand and threw it against the screen bottom. All the sand went straight through, but the pebbles, even some smaller than Arcturus, fell back in a pile. It would not be possible for Arcturus to go through that wire screening.

Uncle Dan took every single bit of loose sand from the space covered by the tent, and threw it against the screen. Olive and Lucy and Dora watched the pebbles which fell back. Arcturus could not escape three pairs of eyes. But finally there was no more loose sand, only a kind of stiff dry clay, and no Arcturus.

Dora tried hard not to cry but she felt much grieved. It did not seem possible that the bear could evade a search like that. She managed to thank Uncle Dan, who was as sorry as Olive that it had been of no use. They smoothed the sand floor and Uncle Dan returned the screen

and the shovel. No, there was nothing left but to think of Arcturus as being a sand-bear now, enjoying himself by the sea.

Then they went swimming, and how Uncle Dan and Father Merrill did laugh at Olive. Olive said that it was Sunday morning and that she usually went to church instead of into the ocean. She should take with her a cake of salt-water soap and call it a bath. She wasn't sure it was quite right to go swimming just for fun. She should feel more comfortable about it if she took the soap.

Mrs. Merrill did not laugh at Olive. She said she was glad that Olive liked to keep Sunday different from other days.

CHAPTER IV

FRIENDS FROM HOME

DURING all that week at White Beach it rained only a part of one afternoon. Both " Doctor Dolittle " and " Katy " stayed shut into Mother's suit-case. After the mishap to Arcturus, nothing precious was trusted in the tent. Even on the day the rain fell, the air was so warm and soft that Lucy and Dora played on the shore just the same and thought the sprinkles only the more fun.

Every day people passed up and down the beach. Sometimes they were children who would stop and help Lucy and Dora build a sand fort or run races with them in the edge of the water. Sometimes they had a collection of pebbles to be admired, or a sea-urchin picked up in the sand. These were considered great

treasures. Some were worn smooth by the waves, and some—but these were fewer—still had long green spines sticking to their shells.

Except for the friendly children, Lucy and Dora paid very little attention to the passers-by. They could see as many people as they wished in Westmore, but in Westmore there were no gulls and no beach and no sea.

One afternoon Dora did look up when a gentleman on horseback came down the shore. The horse was the color of a bright chestnut and his hair reflected the sun. Somebody must have brushed that horse extremely hard to make him so shiny.

Dora looked at the horse and Lucy looked at the rider and presently Lucy smiled a little.

The gentleman glanced at the children and smiled also. "Aren't you Mr. Merrill's little girls?" he asked.

At this Dora looked up. It was Alice

Harper's father. They often saw him in church.

Mr. Harper made the pretty horse stop. He asked Lucy where they were staying. He looked at the shack and at the tent beside it.

"And do you sleep in the tent?" he asked. Lucy explained that they did.

"Alice has wanted to sleep in one this summer, but her mother wasn't willing. I know it is great fun. I will tell Alice that you are here and I think she will be down to see you. Our house is the other side of the life-saving station."

Mr. Harper and the shiny horse went on along the beach. Dora watched for some time. The horse walked down by the water where the sand was hard, but whenever a wave came curling in, he danced up the beach. Evidently he did not like to get his feet wet.

When the children went up to supper they told Mrs. Merrill about their visitor.

"He had a very pretty horse. It shone like a bottle," said Dora.

"Do you think Alice will come to see us?" asked Lucy.

"I wouldn't set my heart on it," said Mrs. Merrill.

"Mrs. Harper is always very nice to everybody in the church," said Olive, who was trying to make toast over the oil stove and was not succeeding very well.

"I know she is," agreed Mrs. Merrill. "But church isn't the beach, and people who live in big houses don't always want to know people who live in small ones."

Olive burned a slice of bread and gave a little moan over it, so Dora forgot to ask just what Mother meant. She felt quite sure that Alice would come. Of course, her father

might forget to tell her. Fathers did sometimes forget very important things, like posting letters and giving messages and bringing home yeast-cakes.

Lucy also thought that Alice would come, and they were not disappointed. The very next afternoon, which was Friday, while they were playing on the beach, Alice came, and Mrs. Harper with her. Alice stopped with the children and Mrs. Harper went straight to the shack to speak with Mrs. Merrill and Olive. Father and Uncle Dan had gone fishing.

Alice asked a great many questions. She wished to know how long they had been there, how long they were going to stay, and why they had not been to see her.

It was easy to answer the first question and the second answered itself, because school began the next Monday and the printing-press

started work again, but the third question was not so easy.

“We did not know where your house was,” said Lucy at last.

“You could have asked,” said Alice. “There are no girls my age anywhere near me. I have had nobody to play with all summer but babies and boys. The babies are very well for a time, but they can’t do much but dig holes in the sand, and I don’t like the boys at all. They do horrible things, like putting crabs in shoes and dead fish in playhouses.”

“Girls are nicer to play with,” said Lucy. “Would you like to make a pebble house, Alice, or would you like to wade?”

“I would like to go into your tent,” said Alice eagerly.

The children took Alice up to the tent, which she admired very much. “What fun

it must be!" she said. "I wish I could sleep here with you just one night."

Lucy and Dora began to wonder if this could be planned. It did not seem easy, for there was not room for another cot, even if there were one to bring from the house. It would be hard to find space for even a doll's bed. As it was, Lucy's doll had to sleep with her. Dora's Teddy wore a fur coat and *he* sat up all night. It would not be polite to ask Olive to give Lucy her cot, and there was no place for her to sleep if she did. There seemed no way to make Alice's wish come true.

When the children came out of the tent, they saw Mrs. Merrill on the porch with her hat on and a coat over her arm.

"Goody!" said Alice. "Mother was going to ask your mother if she didn't want to go over to the Port in the motor-boat. We are going, too."

What a pleasant surprise this was! Lucy and Dora thought it very kind of Mrs. Harper. They had half envied Father and Uncle Dan their trip.

Everybody walked up the beach beyond the life-saving station where the boats lay ready to be launched the moment they were needed. Ships need help sometimes as well as people, and these boats were always waiting for a call from sea.

Beyond the station lay a row of pretty houses on a curving strip of land which ran around a big bay. Across, was the town which Alice called the Port.

Mrs. Harper took them up on the porch of her cottage and gave them some lemonade and cookies. She brought out the pitcher herself and Alice brought the glasses. It tasted very good because there was no ice at the shack to keep things cool.

After drinking the lemonade they went down to the boat-house where a man helped them into the motor-boat. Lucy and Dora had been around World's End Pond in a launch, but this one was much more trim and tidy and went through the water much faster. Its boards were very white and all the brass shone and it plunged right at each wave as though it were going to dive through rather than sit on top.

Dora became very quiet. The foam flew on either side, and the waves were as blue as Mother's blueing water, but on the whole she liked the pond better than the sea. For one thing, there was not so much of it.

Lucy and Alice went forward in the launch. Alice wanted to sit on the roof of the little cabin. Mrs. Harper said she might if the man at the wheel thought it was safe.

"Safe as lying in a cradle," said the man,

so Lucy and Alice climbed up where they could get all the wind that blew.

“Don’t you want to go with them?” Mrs. Harper asked Dora.

“No, thank you,” said Dora shyly. She was sitting next Olive and presently she cuddled so close that Olive understood and put an arm around her.

Before long the waves grew even larger and some of them broke over the bow of the launch. Alice and Lucy were spattered with spray and both gave little shrieks.

“Don’t you feel well, Dora?” asked Olive in a whisper. “Don’t you want to go to the Port?”

“I’d rather go on land,” said Dora. “*Any* land.”

Dora spoke softly but Mrs. Harper heard. “Poor child!” she said. “And I thought she would enjoy a ride.”

Mrs. Harper opened a locker, which was a cupboard under the seat, and took out a big soft shawl. She spread it on the seat and told Dora to lie down.

Dora was extremely glad to feel herself on something flat. She shut her eyes and kept still while Mother and Mrs. Harper wrapped her in the rug. Then Mrs. Harper spoke to the man at the wheel. He turned the launch in a different direction so that the bow did not hit the waves quite so hard.

It seemed a long time to Dora before they were back at the boat-house. The launch had been out only about an hour, but she thought it was the whole afternoon. Alice and Lucy thought it was about ten minutes.

Just as soon as she stepped ashore, Dora began to feel better, and she did not really need the hot soup which Mrs. Harper insisted she should drink. By the time they were home

at the little shack, Dora could hardly believe that she had not enjoyed the trip.

“But would you like to go again in the launch?” asked Olive.

No, Dora would not go so far as to say that. She felt surprised and hurt, that the sea which looked so lovely, could make her feel so disagreeable.

When the fishermen came they brought with them five fish. Four were ordinary plain fish such as the children often saw at the market, but the fifth one, which Uncle Dan had caught, was much longer and broader and looked strange. Dora at once asked Uncle Dan its name.

“I think it is a walrus,” said Dan gravely.

Lucy looked respectfully at the fish but Dora looked at Uncle Dan. Though his face was quite unsmiling, there was a twinkle in his eyes.

“ It must be a walrus,” he went on, “ because I am a carpenter, you see.”

Lucy didn't “ see ” at all, but Dora laughed in delight. Of *course* it must be a walrus. She remembered the poem perfectly.

“The Walrus and the Carpenter
Were walking close at hand;
They wept like anything to see
Such quantities of sand:
‘If this were only cleared away,’
They said, ‘it would be grand!’

“ ‘If seven maids with seven mops
Swept it for half a year,
Do you suppose,’ the Walrus said,
‘That they could get it clear?’
‘I doubt it,’ said the Carpenter,
And shed a bitter tear.’”

Dora laughed hard at Uncle Dan waving the fish and pretending to wipe his eyes. Olive understood and laughed also, but Lucy and Mrs. Merrill didn't understand the joke at all.

Then the fishermen were told about the

launch trip and Dora was rather sorry they had to know that she did not enjoy it. But she felt comforted when Father confided to her that he did not like the motion of the boat himself.

“It was all right as long as we kept moving,” he said, “but when we anchored to fish, I felt as though my dinner wasn’t to be depended upon.”

“I know just how you felt,” said Dora earnestly. “I grew so jiggly that my stomach came up on top of me.”

And the very next day they had to go home. The truck was to come over early in the afternoon and everything must be ready. Uncle Dan and Olive were going back by trolley and they said they would take the children, but Lucy and Dora decided to ride on the truck.

For that last dinner they had another chowder, because it was easy to make and to heat when there was not a great deal of time for

cooking. And it was odd how easy the packing seemed. Scarcely five minutes were needed to tuck into the suit-case the clothes it had taken so long to choose. The cookies and cake and apples were all eaten.

Only, as Dora folded the last rug and looked around the empty tent, ready now to be taken down, she thought of Arcturus and the tears came to her eyes. She did not mean anybody to see them, because they had all been so kind. Mother had not said one word about her being careless and Lucy offered to give back the pink coral heart Dora had lent to her. But when the tent was all pulled to pieces, the thought of her dear bear was more than she could stand. Olive saw her wipe away a tear and put an arm around her.

“I am so sorry, Dora,” she said. “Indeed, if I could, I would get you another bear.”

“It wouldn’t be Arcturus,” choked Dora.

“No,” agreed Olive, “but it might be his twin brother. I don’t suppose it would be possible to buy one in this country, and I shall never be lucky enough to go to Switzerland. But I am *thinking* you a little bear, Dora. Can’t you feel him growing?”

Dora pretended she could, and when she came out of the tent, nobody could have suspected any tears. But as they left White Beach, her last look was not for the sea nor the sky nor the gulls, nor the goldenrod and asters along the sandhills, but for the place where the tent had stood, and in her heart she was hoping that Arcturus would be very happy in his new life by the shore.

CHAPTER V

WHEN SCHOOL BEGINS

TIMOTHY was glad to see Lucy and Dora come home. He looked fat, and Marion Baker said he had slept in the kitchen every night but one. On Wednesday evening he chose to visit his friends. But Timmy had evidently been lonesome, for he purred loudly and followed the children up to their room. As soon as the suit-case was opened, he got into it to see whether they had brought anything for him. Dora had done so. There was in the suit-case a stalk of catnip for Timothy.

Some mail and papers were at the house and when Mother looked over the letters there was one for Dora from Miss Chandler, whom she called Aunt Margaret.

Dora planned to answer the letter on Sunday. There was much to tell about the beach. Only, when she began to write, she thought of Arcturus and felt quite sad. When she spoke of him, Mother suggested that Dora should tell Miss Chandler how Arcturus had run away. It was right that she should know, because she gave Dora the little bear.

To write about it in a letter was easier than speaking of it when she saw Miss Chandler, so Dora wrote what had happened and how sorry she was. Then she told her about the nice time at the beach, and what fun it was to sleep in a tent, and how she and Lucy rode home sitting on a roll of blankets in the back of the truck.

When the letter was finished, Mother looked at it. She told Dora about one word which was spelled wrong and said that the writing looked neat. Then she told Dora how to di-

rect the envelope and gave her a postage stamp from Father's desk.

Dora stuck the stamp on the proper corner and put the letter in the box on the post by Mr. Giddings' drug-store. Then she came back to the house and read the "Story of Doctor Dolittle." She thought it was one of the most interesting and funniest stories she had ever read. She tried to have Lucy enjoy it, but Lucy liked "What Katy Did" better.

After supper that Sunday night, Dora followed Mother into her bedroom.

"I have a plan," she said. "Mother, you know Aunt Margaret told me that her birthday is the same as mine. Both are next Friday. I would very much like to make her a birthday present, Mother. You see she gave me Arcturus and the other little charms. And anyway, it would be nice, because she was so kind to us in the vacation school."

Mrs. Merrill thought this was a nice plan. She asked Dora what she wanted to give Miss Chandler.

"I have twenty-five cents," said Dora, "which I earned picking blackberries. I thought I could buy her some paper to write letters on."

"I think," said Mrs. Merrill, "that Miss Chandler would like better a gift which you made for her. You know you did some cross-stitching for the bedspread this summer. Haven't you still the paper with the pattern showing the colored squares?"

Yes, Dora still had the paper pattern of the roses.

"I am going to the city to-morrow," said Mrs. Merrill. "Would you like me to buy a bit of the canvas they use for cross-stitching, and four skeins of colored cotton? Then you could make a pincushion for Miss Chandler

with the cross-stitched roses on it. I have a piece of pretty white linen you may use for the top, and I will help you put the cushion together. Don't you think that would be a nice present?"

Dora was perfectly delighted with Mother's plan. She begged her to find the piece of white linen at once, and when she saw it, she was sure that it would make an unusual cushion. She was so afraid that Mother would forget what an important errand that canvas was, that she took a pencil and wrote it down on a piece of paper and stuck the paper into Mother's purse, where she could not fail to see it.

Next morning school began. Lucy and Dora were glad, for both liked to go to school. Lucy was one grade ahead of Dora and so each year, Dora had the teacher Lucy was leaving. Because she heard Lucy talk about them at home, she felt acquainted immediately,

and it was not hard to change into a higher grade.

This year Lucy was sorry to leave Miss Leger, and she was not sure she should like Miss Scott, into whose room she was going. Some of the older girls did not like her.

While Mother was tying their hair-ribbons, Lucy spoke to her about it. Mother did not think Miss Scott would be cross.

“If you learn your lessons, Lucy, and behave yourself as well as you should do, your teacher will not be cross. It is only sick or naughty children who can’t get on at school.”

Lucy admitted that Mother’s advice sounded sensible, and she and Dora started for school. Lucy had on a white waist, which had buttoned to it a pink plaid kilted skirt. On the waist was a collar of the pink plaid gingham. When Mother planned that dress, Lucy

did not think she should like it, but now the dress was made, she liked it very much.

Dora wore a new dress, too. Hers was a loose blue gingham which was smocked at the shoulders and had a round white collar. They both wore socks and sneakers, because Mother thought best to save their leather shoes for colder weather.

All the children seemed glad to come back to school. All the little girls wore clean crisp dresses, slipped on five minutes before they started for the schoolhouse. All the little boys had clean shirt-waists and their hair brushed back very hard and very wet.

The children went into the rooms belonging to their new grades. Lucy hoped to get a back seat in a row of desks, for all the girls considered the back seats the most desirable. Lucy didn't get the seat she wanted, but the one she did get was the third from the back,

and beside a window, so that was not so bad.

Dora didn't care where she sat, and this was lucky, because Miss Leger told the children to stand, and then arranged them according to how tall they were, with the smallest ones in front. This put Dora in the first seat of all, but she liked it as well as any other.

Everything went well until recess and then an accident happened to Dora. The little girls were playing tag on the grassy grounds about the schoolhouse. The older girls were walking up and down with arms around each other's waists, talking of the many things which had happened during the long vacation.

Dora was playing with five other little girls and running as fast as she could when suddenly something hit her hard and everything turned black.

The next Dora knew she was lying flat on

the soft grass and Lucy was holding her hand and one of the big girls was putting water on her face. And ever so many girls were standing around and looking at her.

“What is the matter?” asked Dora.
“What hit me?”

“You and Marion Baker ran into each other,” said the big girl who was mopping her face.

Dora thought this odd. She had not even *seen* Marion. How queer that she could run into a person whom she didn’t see!

The next second Dora discovered that her lip was cut and bleeding. It hurt worse than her head and the blood was dropping on the pretty blue dress which had been so fresh and clean that morning.

When the littler girls saw the blood-stains, they were frightened. Some of them ran to tell Miss Leger that Dora was hurt.

Miss Leger came out at once. She bathed Dora's lip and found that there was only a small cut. It was very small to produce so many drops of blood. She told Dora to hold the wet cloth against it. Then she looked at Marion, who had a big bump on her forehead.

For a time both Dora and Marion felt very sorry for themselves, but in a few minutes Marion's head stopped aching and Dora's lip no longer shed bright drops of blood. They could even think it funny that with all that big school-yard, both should have tried to stand in the same place at the same second.

Lucy was disturbed about Dora's dress. It looked worse than Dora could see. Mother was shopping and would not be at home until afternoon school was over. Lucy did not know what was best to do about the dress.

Luckily Father knew. He was sorry that Dora's lip was cut, but glad she was not badly

hurt. He said that Dora had better take off the dress and put it to soak in cold water. He was sure that cold water would not hurt it and that it would be safe to leave it soaking until Mother came and decided what should be done to it next. He asked Dora if she did not have another clean dress.

Yes, there was a clean dress, but not perfectly new, like the blue gingham. Dora was sorry to change, but she saw that even a dress which wasn't brand-new looked more tidy than one dribbled with red spots. She took off the spotted one and Lucy buttoned the other and they went back to school.

When they were through at four, Mrs. Merrill was at home. She had attended to the blue gingham and it was hanging on the line, just as clean as ever. Of course she wanted to know about the spots.

Lucy and Dora told her about them and then

Dora asked anxiously if Mother found the note in her purse and if she remembered to buy the canvas and the colored cottons.

Mrs. Merrill had remembered. There was a piece of canvas and two shades of green cotton and two of pink. They had cost seventeen cents.

Dora ran to bring Mother her quarter, for she wanted to pay for them so that her gift to Aunt Margaret should be entirely hers. Mrs. Merrill gave her eight cents in change.

“And will you fix the top of the cushion so I can begin on it right away?” she asked.

“I can’t do it just this minute,” said Mrs. Merrill, “because I have to cook something for supper. I will try to do it early this evening.”

“Dora and I will wash the dishes and do all the clearing away, so you can have plenty of time,” offered Lucy.

After supper, Mrs. Merrill sat down with

the pattern and the cross-stitch canvas and the linen for the cushion top. She measured and planned carefully. She basted the canvas in the proper place so it could not slip while Dora was working. She made one cross-stitch so Dora could start easily.

When the last dish was put away, Dora came eagerly to see the cushion. From the one stitch Mother had set, it was easy to follow the pattern and she sat down at once to sew. Before bedtime, the roses and their leaves were made and she was ready to pull out the canvas.

Mother showed her how to do this, just one thread at a time. They were stiff and hurt her fingers, but she kept on and soon the linen top with its design of roses lay before her.

“ You have done the pretty part now,” said Mrs. Merrill. “ The rest will be plain sewing, but you must set every stitch as well as you possibly can. I want Miss Chandler to think

that you work neatly. I will baste it for you."

"I will try very hard," said Dora. "I suppose I couldn't begin that part this evening?"

"No," said Mrs. Merrill. "Tell Father good-night, and then you and Lucy run up to bed. When you are ready, knock on the floor and I will come and put out the light."

Both Lucy and Dora laughed at forgetful Mother. Almost always she said that when they were going to bed. It *sounded* all right any time, and it *was* all right in winter, when there really was a light to put out. But in September, with daylight-saving time, there was twilight when they went to bed. What Mother meant was that she would come and kiss them and see that the window was open and their clothes properly picked up.

Next day Dora back-stitched the case for the cushion and filled it with some old knitting

wool which she snipped into tiny pieces. Dora was surprised to learn from Mother that pins stick much better into a cushion stuffed with wool. It is no use to stuff one with cotton.

Next, the embroidered top was pressed, and this Dora did herself after Mother had finished ironing. Mother basted the top and bottom together and Dora sewed the edges over and over. She tried so hard to make the stitches even and small that her cheeks grew pink and she felt hot all over. Into each stitch she sewed a loving thought for Miss Chandler.

When the cushion was done, Mother said that it looked very neat and Lucy thought it was beautiful. She liked it so much that Dora had another idea. If Mother would help her, she would make a second cushion for Lucy's Christmas present. There was plenty of cotton for more roses and there were canvas and linen, too. Perhaps it might be possible to

make one for Olive. To make three pretty gifts and have them cost but seventeen cents would be a good deal for a little girl to accomplish.

Dora could hardly wait until Lucy left the room before asking Mother about the other cushions. Mrs. Merrill said at once that she would help. They would be desirable Christmas presents for both Lucy and Olive.

Dora found a clean empty candy-box into which the cushion fitted exactly. She wrapped it neatly in tissue paper and put in a card so Miss Chandler would know from whom it came.

“You might tell her that you made it yourself,” suggested Mother, who was now darning Uncle Dan’s socks.

So Dora put on the card: “I made it myself.” Then she thought a moment and wrote some more: “All but one stitch which Mother

made so I could get the roses in the middle. And the bastings. She sewed those, but they are all pulled out."

Mother smiled a little over Dora's card, but she said that it would do, and that she thought Dora was improving in her writing. Then Dora wrapped the box in brown paper and directed it to Miss Chandler in Boston. She decided to pay the postage with her eight cents. Then there would be nothing about the gift not wholly hers.

CHAPTER VI

DORA'S BIRTHDAY

THE seventeenth of September was Dora's birthday. On Thursday night she went to bed expecting to feel quite different when she waked in the morning and was nine instead of eight. But she didn't. She felt just the same.

The day was bright and sunny but cold. Lucy looked out to see whether there had been a frost. So far as she could see, nothing was touched in the garden. Even the nasturtiums, which get discouraged and turn black if the thermometer casts a glance toward the freezing-point, were looking as alert and cheerful as usual.

When the children were dressed, they ran

down-stairs. Lucy went into the kitchen to help Mother. Dora sat down in the parlor and tried to read. The birthday girl never helped about breakfast. She didn't even come near the table till she was called.

Dora simply couldn't read. She knew there was to be a surprise and she wanted to think how pleasant it would be. Out in the kitchen she could hear Lucy whispering to Mother and then came a rustle of paper as though somebody was arranging soft packages.

"Breakfast is ready," called Lucy at last. "All right for you to come, Dora."

Dora didn't need to be called but once. Nobody does on a birthday morning.

She saw that her plate was covered with bundles, and then she had to hide because Uncle Dan said that her nose must be buttered and that she should have nine spanks, and one to grow on.

Dora had to dodge around the table till Mother told Uncle Dan to sit down and behave properly. Uncle Dan put down the butter-knife and Dora let him catch her and give her ten love pats and a big hug.

Then Father kissed her, and Mother said if they wasted any more time the children would be late for school and Father and Uncle Dan would be late for work.

Dora sat down at her place and picked up the first package. It was fat and not a bit heavy. She opened it to find some yarn, soft, and of the prettiest blue you can imagine. Dora didn't know it, but it was the color of her eyes.

"That is to make you a sweater," said Mother. "I am going to knit one like Mary Burton's. You said you liked hers so much."

Dora was delighted. She kissed Mother and looked very happy.

“My old sweater is growing so small,” she said. “Will you knit it soon, Mother?”

“I will begin it this evening,” said Mrs. Merrill. “I want some work to pick up after supper.”

“It is the color I like best,” said Dora, and she opened another package.

This was from Olive and it contained two new hair-ribbons. One was blue and exactly matched the sweater yarn. The other was pink. Dora liked them both.

The next package was small and heavy and Dora wondered what it could be. It was a paint-box with paints of all the different colors that any picture could possibly need. This was from Uncle Dan, and Dora went straight and hugged him.

“How did you know I wanted a paint-box?” she asked. “I wanted it very much and I didn’t expect to have one.”

"A little bird told me," said Dan promptly.

"I guess it was an Olive-bird," laughed Dora. "I don't remember telling anybody but Olive how much I wanted one."

Lucy was eager for Dora to open her gift. Dora thought it was lovely. It was a roll of colored papers and paper lace, for making hats and dresses for paper dolls. Such a gift was most desirable for work on winter evenings.

Now two packages were left, one of which had come through the mail. Dora opened the other first. This was from Father and was a copy of "Alice in Wonderland."

Dora loved that story. She had borrowed it many times from the Public Library and never expected to have a copy of her own. Father explained that he had a chance to buy it through the printing-press and knew she would like it.

"There is another part to my present," he

said. "Next week there is to be a good film at the movies, 'Anne of Green Gables.' You and Lucy and Mother are to see the afternoon performance."

Lucy and Dora both had to hug Father now. It was not often that Mother let them go to the movie theatre. She thought the pictures were not as nice as books. It would be great fun to see "Anne," and all the more fun to know about it so long before.

Now there was one package left to open, but under it were two post-cards and a letter. One card was from Mr. Thorne, the rector of the church where the Merrills went and where Uncle Dan sang in the choir. The other was from Miss Page, Dora's Sunday school teacher. Both had remembered to send a birthday greeting.

The letter and the package were from Miss Chandler. Dora took off the outer wrapper of

the package and found a candy-box, much like the one her pincushion had gone traveling in. But no candy, unless made of sea-foam, could be so light as that box. When she opened it, nothing showed but tissue paper.

Very carefully, Dora pulled this out and in the middle, wrapped in bright red paper so she could not fail to see it, was a small box, tied with white ribbon. When she opened it Dora gave a gasp. She was so surprised that she could not speak.

Inside the box was a little thing rolled in cotton, and when Dora's trembling fingers took it out, it was another charm for her to wear on her silver chain.

This charm was a tiny kitten, about three-quarters of an inch high. Unless it had upset a blueing bottle, no earthly kitten was ever that color. This one was deep blue, and it didn't seem to be made either of glass or metal. Its

pointed ears gave it a surprised look and its kitten face wore a pleasant expression. About its neck was a silver collar with a ring at the back to slip on a chain. About its feet its tail coiled tight as though to keep its paws from scattering. Anybody could see that it was an unusual kitten. Dora felt sure it must have a story.

“The letter is from Miss Chandler,” said Mother. “If you open it, Dora, it may tell you where the little cat came from. I suppose it is something she brought from Europe.”

The kitten had come from even farther than Europe! Dora read the letter aloud.

“DEAR LITTLE DORA:

“Many happy returns of your birthday! I hope you may have the nicest possible time. I am sorry Arcturus was so ungrateful as to run away from his kind mistress, but you know bears are wild at heart. I am sending you another pet in his place, one which I hope will be willing to stay at home. This is a

Chinese kitten which came from the city of Hong Kong. If you drop it, it will not break because it is made of stained ivory.

"Since you named your bear for a star, perhaps you may like a star name for this kitten. Would you like to call it Vega? That is the name of a brilliant star which in summer is almost directly overhead. I am sure your uncle will help you find it. It is a star which shines with a blue light, so its name is suited to a blue kitten."

Dora was delighted that the blue kitten should be named for a blue star. She stopped to say so before finishing the letter.

"I wanted to spend our birthday together, but I have to teach all day. So I made another plan which Mother will tell you."

Dora at once turned to Mother. "I will tell you when you have eaten your porridge," said Mrs. Merrill. "Your breakfast is getting cold, Dora. Eat your oatmeal and drink your milk."

"No eat—no go," said Uncle Dan.

“Dan, keep still,” said Mrs. Merrill. “Begin to eat, Dora.”

Dora was too happy to feel hungry, but she knew the oatmeal must go down and that she must eat an egg and a slice of toast. When she had almost finished, Mrs. Merrill told the plan.

“I had a letter, too, from Miss Chandler,” she said. “She has invited you and Lucy to come into Boston to-morrow morning and stay with her until Sunday afternoon.”

“Mother! May we?” exclaimed Lucy and Dora in one breath.

“I never went to Boston but twice in my life,” said Lucy.

“I never visited anybody over night,” said Dora and then they both said, “Mother, *do* let us!”

“Father and I are willing you should go,” replied Mrs. Merrill. “Miss Chandler sent a

dollar to pay for your tickets, and Father will put you on the eight o'clock train and Miss Chandler will meet you in the North Station."

"I didn't know Aunt Margaret kept house," said Lucy.

"It isn't a real house," said Mrs. Merrill, "that is, not like this one. She has some rooms in a big building."

"Mother!" said Dora, "oh, Mother, may I take Aunt Margaret a piece of my birthday cake?"

"How do you know there will be a birthday cake?" asked Mrs. Merrill.

"Because there always is," said Dora.

CHAPTER VII

ABOUT BOSTON

YOU may be sure that Lucy and Dora did not oversleep next morning. For supper there had been pink ice-cream and a proper birthday cake with nine pink candles, and the holiday feeling lasted all night.

Father took them to the station and put them on the train. He spoke to the conductor and then to Lucy.

“Now, Lucy,” he said, “if Miss Chandler is not on the platform where the train comes in, you and Dora are to walk right back to the car where you got off, and this gentleman will bring you home on his next train.”

“But, Father,” said Dora, “Aunt Margaret will be there. She *said* she would meet us.”

“Yes, I know,” said Father, “and I think she will be waiting. This is so you will know what to do if anything happens to prevent her being there.”

Father kissed them and the conductor said, “All aboard!” Father stepped off quickly.

Neither Lucy nor Dora often went on a train. They traveled so seldom that it was great fun to see the farmhouses and cows and hens as the train scurried past, and to watch the telegraph poles swooping down to gather up their wires.

Before long, the farms grew fewer, and the houses came closer together and instead of having only two tracks, one for the trains going to Boston and the other for trains going in the

opposite direction, there were many tracks on both sides, with engines puffing past or cars standing in long lines.

Quite soon the trainman came and took their suit-case. Lucy looked at it anxiously for it contained a clean white dress for her and one for Dora. These were to be worn on Sunday if Aunt Margaret wished to take them to church. Lucy was not sure what the man meant to do with the suit-case.

Dora did not notice his taking it. The train was moving across a bridge with water coming quite close on either side. In the air, gulls were flying, and in the distance she could see some big ships.

The trainman saw that Lucy looked troubled. "The conductor told me to take this," he said. "I'll go with you to meet the party you are looking for."

Lucy didn't know what he meant. "But we

aren't going to a party," she said shyly. "We are going to meet Aunt Margaret."

The trainman smiled. "I'll help you meet her," he said, and he looked so pleasant that Lucy was willing he should take the suit-case.

When the train stopped, the children followed the other people to the door and there the trainman stood with the suit-case. He lifted Dora down and took Lucy by the elbow to help her just as he did the grown-up ladies. Then he walked with them down a long platform.

Lucy and Dora were glad that he came with them. The train was standing under a big shed with a very high roof and many people were hurrying about. Huge engines snorted and made so much noise that it seemed most confusing.

Miss Chandler stood by the gate which let the people through from the train-shed into the

other part of the station. She kissed the little girls and thanked the kind trainman for helping them find her.

The first thing was to dispose of the suitcase. Miss Chandler called a messenger-boy and sent him to take it to her rooms.

“Now,” she said to the children, “we will go by the elevated train.”

Lucy and Dora had read about the elevated railways in big cities, but neither had been on one. They went through the big station and up some steps and through a turnstile and along a corridor above a street where the trucks and electric cars were, and up some more steps to a platform. Soon a train of cars came, but it did not have a smoky engine. This train ran by electricity.

“Is this the elevated train?” asked Dora.

“Yes, this is the elevated,” said Miss Chandler, laughing. “We will step into this car.”

In half a minute the train was again moving, but the children were surprised because it did not stay on the tracks above the street. Instead, it promptly plunged underground, into a lighted tunnel which ran under the street instead of above it.

“It is a funny kind of elevated train which runs underground, isn’t it?” said Miss Chandler. “But it does in Boston.”

Lucy and Dora thought it was odd, but they liked the brightly lighted stations where the train stopped. Quite soon, Miss Chandler said they would get out.

When they left the car they were still underground and climbed many stairs before seeing daylight. When they came out, it was on a sidewalk in the midst of tall buildings, much higher than any in the city where Mother went shopping. The streets were very narrow and at almost every crossing stood a policeman. He

told the automobiles to stop and let people cross the street, or he told the people to wait on the sidewalk until it was safe for them to come. Everybody did exactly what he told them to do.

“ I think it is very kind of that policeman to stand there and help the people,” said Dora.

Miss Chandler smiled. “ Do you, Dora? ” she asked. “ He says we may cross now.”

Such wonderful shop-windows! Lucy and Dora were really obliged to stop and look, for they had never imagined anything so beautiful. One big window was draped with silks of different shades of orange and flame.

“ Is it a fairy palace? ” asked Dora. “ It is like a story I read once.”

No, it was not a palace, only a big shop and people could go in and buy those very silks if they liked. Miss Chandler let the children look in a number of windows and then she called

their attention to an open space across the street.

“Let us go over on the Common,” she said. “Perhaps the squirrels will come to be fed.”

Directly across from the beautiful shops was a big park with great elms and green grass and seats where men and women were sitting. When the children entered, they saw three fat gray squirrels with bushy tails climbing over a man who sat on one of the seats.

“They know he has nuts for them,” said Miss Chandler.

The man saw the children looking at him. He drew his hand from his pocket and it contained some peanuts.

“Would you like to feed the squirrels?” he asked.

“Will they bite?” asked Lucy.

“Not if you don’t scare them. Don’t touch

them nor try to grab them, but just hold the nut in your fingers."

"Thank you," said Lucy and took one nut.

"May we?" Dora asked Miss Chandler, and when she smiled, Dora took a nut and thanked the man.

The squirrels came at once. Dora shivered a little when her squirrel put its paws about her fingers to steady the nut. Its wee hands felt so queer!

The third squirrel sat on the man's knee and nibbled a peanut. When it was eaten, it put its paws over its heart in a beseeching way. As well as it knew how, it was begging for another.

Perhaps it was lucky that the man did not have many peanuts, for Lucy and Dora would have stayed until they were all gone. When there were no more, they thanked the man again and followed Miss Chandler across the Common.

“Who takes care of the squirrels in the winter?” asked Lucy. “Who would feed them if the people didn’t?”

“The park commissioners feed them,” said Miss Chandler. “Did you know that the State legislature of Massachusetts once stopped some important work to provide for a family of orphan gray squirrels on Boston Common?”

“Did they really?” asked Lucy.

“They really did. So you see that the squirrels would be looked after even if people didn’t like to feed them with peanuts. Did you ever hear of the Frog Pond?”

“I have,” said Lucy eagerly. “I have just studied about it in my history class. Dora hasn’t had history yet, but we can tell her.”

Dora looked at the small pond before them. She didn’t see any frogs.

“Just think, Dora,” said Miss Chandler,

“that pond has been here since the first people came to Boston. The boys always slide on it in winter. Once during the Revolutionary War, British soldiers camped on the Common. They spoiled the ice where the children wanted to slide.”

“I know what happened,” said Lucy proudly. “The general in command of the British army was a very cross man, but the boys didn’t care if he was. They went straight and told him what the soldiers had done. And the General said they were to let the slide alone. Didn’t he, Aunt Margaret?”

“He did,” said Miss Chandler.

Dora looked respectfully at the Frog Pond. There were better places in Westmore for sliding when winter came, but it was interesting to know that children had played with the Frog Pond ever since there were any children in Boston to play there.

Beyond the Common lay a pretty park, called the Public Garden, and here they came to a larger body of water with white birds swimming on it. Some were ducks and some were swans, and the children stopped to watch them. Miss Chandler kept looking at a wooden platform not far away. Part of it was on the bank and part floated on the water.

Presently a boat came in sight, but it was like no boat Lucy and Dora had ever seen. It was not like the launch on World's End Pond nor like the one at the beach. It looked like a tremendous great bird, floating lightly on the water.

"Would you like to go in the swan boat?" asked Miss Chandler.

Would they like to! Dora and Lucy could hardly speak for joy. But Dora asked one question.

“There won’t be any waves, will there?” she inquired anxiously. “Not to tip the swan about?”

“It will be perfectly smooth,” said Miss Chandler, and it was. Dora enjoyed every second she spent in the swan boat.

Next, Miss Chandler took them to the Boston Public Library. The children were very fond of the library in Westmore, but they had never imagined a library as big as this great building. Miss Chandler told them that Boston was a large city and the people needed many books to read.

They stayed a long time in the Public Library. In it were many rooms and in some were beautiful paintings. To see them, they climbed a marble stair where great lions kept guard. Dora at once revised her ideas of fairy palaces. If only that windowful of silks could be hung on the walls of the marble stair, it

would be better than any palace of which she had read.

On the walls of one room were paintings about Sir Galahad. Lucy and Dora knew his story and how he went to seek the Holy Grail. Miss Chandler explained each painting.

Then she took them into a pleasant room with low bookcases and small tables and chairs and told them that it belonged to the children of Boston. All the books on the shelves were books which children liked to read.

Dora looked at the shelves carefully. It would be nice to have a library just for children, with no grown-ups at all. Still, the Westmore library was nice, and a little town didn't need a big library like Boston. Some of the books she saw on the shelves were in the children's corner of the Westmore library.

"Now I think it is time for luncheon," said Miss Chandler. "We will have it rather early

because I have a plan for this afternoon and I don't want you to get too tired."

Lucy and Dora had not thought about eating, but now it was mentioned, they both felt hungry.

Miss Chandler stopped an electric car near the library. To the amusement of the children, after running a few blocks down a wide street, the car dived underground. Cars in Boston seemed to have this habit.

When they came out of the subway they were in a different part of town, one which was crowded with people and had many large stores.

Miss Chandler took them into one of these stores and up in an elevator to where there was a restaurant with music playing.

First they washed their hands and smoothed their hair and then sat at a pretty round table with two pink asters in a vase.

In every direction were tables with people eating luncheon. The waitresses wore gray linen uniforms and white caps, and boys in white suits carried away trays of used dishes. The place was so large and strange that Dora was glad Miss Chandler was with them.

"What would you like for lunch?" Miss Chandler asked.

"Ice-cream, please," said Lucy.

"Oh, yes!" said Dora. "I would like that best of anything, Aunt Margaret."

"We will have ice-cream for dessert," said Miss Chandler, "but we must eat something else first."

Neither Lucy nor Dora cared especially what they had for lunch. There was too much to see for them to feel interested in the paper which had printed on it the things to eat.

"We will have fricasseed chicken and baked potatoes and rolls," said Miss Chandler. "I

will have some coffee and you girls shall have milk. Then we will all order ice-cream."

The luncheon came on pretty dishes and the chicken was gay with green parsley. The potatoes sat in white paper boats. Most unusual of all, each lump of sugar for Miss Chandler's coffee came wrapped in smooth white paper.

Miss Chandler said she did not use sugar in her coffee and that the children might each have one lump. Lucy ate hers while waiting for the ice-cream, but Dora tucked hers into a coat pocket. She thought she would take it to Mother.

"What is the nice plan for the afternoon, Aunt Margaret?" Lucy asked when she had finished her chocolate ice-cream. Dora's ice-cream was strawberry and Miss Chandler's vanilla.

But the afternoon of that day must have a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER VIII

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

OF course the Chinese kitten came to Boston with Dora. To visit Miss Chandler without wearing her gift would be rude. Mother took a pair of pliers and bent the clasp on Dora's silver chain so that it unfastened less easily. It must have come apart while Dora was sleeping, and so Arcturus found a chance to escape. Mother made sure that Vega could not get away.

Dora was holding the dear kitten in one hand while Miss Chandler explained her afternoon plan. They were to see "Jack and the Beanstalk." This was a play, not a film picture, but a most unusual play, because it was acted, not by real people, but by dolls!

Lucy and Dora both opened their eyes wide. How could dolls act a play? They had sometimes tried to have a play with their dolls, but the stupid things would not take any interest.

Miss Chandler explained that these dolls were called marionettes. All any one could see was the stage with the marionettes giving the play, but they were really worked by strings attached to their jointed arms and legs. These strings went up above the stage and were pulled by people out of sight.

A great many children came to see the marionettes and Lucy and Dora enjoyed looking about at all the little girls and boys.

When the curtain rose, showing Jack and his mother and their cottage, they could scarcely believe that the figures, or puppets, were only dolls. They looked the right size for people. They walked about easily and rapidly. It was possible to understand just

what they were saying, or rather, what the people behind the scenes were saying for them.

How all the children laughed when the cow galloped clumsily in! A frisky cow she was, for she tossed her horns and kicked up her heels when Jack tried to catch her. And then he sold her for the magic bean and planted it, while his mother scolded him and wept.

The magic bean began to grow! Away it went up past the top of the stage, and away went Jack, climbing the stalk while his mother wrung her hands and begged him to come back.

Lucy liked the giant and his wife, but Dora never cared for that part of the story. She was glad when the giants were done with and Jack brought home the gold and chopped down the uncanny beanstalk.

There followed a second play, and this time the actors were cunning rabbits with pointed

ears and furry faces. They wore gingham dresses or trousers and acted much like real boys and girls.

All over the theatre the children laughed aloud when a naughty boy rabbit got himself wet and Mother Rabbit hung him to dry on a line behind the kitchen stove. But it was the grown-ups who laughed when the postman came with a letter, for the postman was a turtle, and turtles, you know, never move very fast.

Lucy and Dora enjoyed every minute. They could have watched the marionettes for hours and were sorry when it was over.

Miss Chandler knew some of the people who managed the puppets, so she took the children behind the scenes. They were astonished to find that Jack was a small doll, and that the giant was only as large as Lucy's biggest one. Because everything on the stage was made just

the proper size for the puppets, it seemed as though they were really as large as living people.

The girls who managed the puppets were dressed in knickerbockers and stood on planks raised above the stage. One of them showed Lucy and Dora exactly how she held Jack, and how by pulling one string or another, she could make him walk across the stage, or raise his arms, or turn his head. It seemed wonderful to the children, and, indeed, it *was* wonderful.

After the play they ate supper at a place called a dairy lunch, with nice milk and butter and white shiny tiled walls. But here there was no music.

“Now we will go home,” said Miss Chandler. “I am sure you have seen enough for to-day.”

Another electric car took them where Miss

Chandler lived. On the fifth floor of a tall building, she had three rooms which were called an apartment. The first was a living-room, with a big table and a lamp and comfortable chairs and many books. There was one bedroom and a tiny bathroom with a tub for short people. Lastly was a sort of cupboard where there was a gas plate and some pretty dishes. This, Miss Chandler said, was called a kitchenette, because it was too small to be a real kitchen.

Lucy and Dora were pleased with this name. They knew now that they had used a kitchenette at the beach.

The suit-case was there before them and on Miss Chandler's bureau was the rosebud cushion. She had liked it very much.

The children were tired enough to go to bed early, but they did wonder where they were to sleep, for the bedroom contained only one bed,

and it was altogether too narrow for more than one person. Three would be a tight fit.

Miss Chandler moved some books from the mantel in the living-room. She pulled a knob. The whole front of the mantel came down and there was a deep box with a mattress.

“This is a folding-bed,” said Miss Chandler.
“Did you ever sleep in one?”

“Never,” said Dora.

“Will it shut up while we are in it?” asked Lucy doubtfully.

“It can’t do that,” said Miss Chandler. She showed them a bolt which kept the bed from shutting until the proper time in the morning. Even if at heart it wanted to close, it couldn’t until the people were ready to put it away.

Miss Chandler brought sheets and blankets, and in five minutes a comfortable bed was

ready for two tired little girls. Soon they were tucked into it.

“I shall be reading in my bedroom for a while,” said Miss Chandler. “If you want anything, just speak to me.”

Miss Chandler expected that the children would talk for a time, but they did not. Lucy was sleepy and Dora had so much to think about that she didn't feel like talking. Very soon Lucy was asleep.

Dora watched the wind blow the sash curtain before the open window and then she suddenly discovered a strange thing. It was exactly like a bright round eye on the wall near the door.

Dora looked at it hard, and the longer she looked, the less she liked it. How could a person or an animal with one eye be staring at her in the dark? How could any eye shine like that?

Dora tucked the Chinese kitten under her cheek for comfort and tried not to look at the queer eye. She looked toward the table where the pretty lamp stood.

That direction wasn't pleasant either. She saw another queer thing, a streak of light this time, which seemed in the middle of the air. It was a thin, short streak, much nearer the folding-bed than the eye on the wall.

Dora hid her face in her pillow and tried to think what these queer things might be, but the longer she thought, the worse they seemed. She turned her head, and there was the round bright eye on the wall. She looked toward the table, and there was the streak of light in a place where no streak ought to be.

Dora sat up in bed and saw a line of light under Miss Chandler's door. That was a right and proper place for it to be. She got up and put her arm across her face so she

should not see the queer eye as she passed. She knocked on the door.

It opened instantly and when Miss Chandler saw Dora, she took her in her arms. "Why, honey, what is the matter?" she asked. "Can't you go to sleep?"

For a minute Dora did not say anything. She was contented just to feel loving arms about her.

"There is a *very* queer thing in that room, Aunt Margaret," she said at last, her head on Miss Chandler's shoulder. "I don't like it at all and I don't think it ought to be there."

"What is it, darling?" asked Miss Chandler.

"It is a round bright eye on the wall," explained Dora. "It looks at me in the dark. And by the table is a little shiny streak."

Miss Chandler gave a soft laugh and hugged

Dora tight. "Would you be afraid of that eye if you saw it with me?" she asked.

Dora said she would not feel afraid. Miss Chandler put out the light in her bedroom. In half a minute, right by the door, out of the darkness grew a shiny round spot, exactly like the one in the living-room.

"You see it, don't you, dear?" asked Miss Chandler. "Now, we will put on the light."

When the room was bright with electricity, Miss Chandler took Dora over to the wall where the eye had shone. There was an electric switch with two push-buttons. One was white and one was black.

"It is this button, Dora," said Miss Chandler. "The top has been painted with something which shines in the dark. It isn't an evil eye at all, little Dora, but a nice friendly eye that says, 'Did you want to put on the electric light? Here am I, showing you just

where to touch your finger and snap it on in a jiffy!’ ”

Miss Chandler turned out the light and Dora saw the button begin to shine. She pushed it in and out and saw how nice it was to have a bright eye to tell her where to find the switch.

“ And the streak by the table? ” she asked.

“ That is a bit of radium paint enclosed in a glass pendant. When you pull the pendant, the lamp on the table lights.”

Dora gave a sigh of relief. “ Thank you, Aunt Margaret,” she said. “ We have gas at home, and after Mother turns it off, nothing shines.”

Miss Chandler tucked Dora again into bed. When Dora was alone in the dark, she could smile at the friendly eye on the wall.

On Sunday morning the children had the fun of getting breakfast in the kitchenette.

First, the folding-bed had to be whisked out of the way, and the room aired and straightened.

There was a wee refrigerator about as large as Mother's cake-box. In it were butter and milk, a jar of cream, and a comb of honey. A paper bag held crisp half-moon rolls, and there was also a tumbler of orange marmalade. Miss Chandler made coffee for herself, and Lucy proudly boiled three eggs exactly four minutes. She knew just how, because she often cooked them for Mother.

After breakfast they went to church, wearing the white dresses. It was fortunate that Mother thought to send an extra dress apiece, for though the gingham dresses were still clean, they were rumpled after all the exciting things that happened on Saturday.

It was a wonderful church to which Miss Chandler took them, big and dark, with windows like rainbows, and an organ which

sounded like heaven. The service was like that in the Westmore church. Dora wished Uncle Dan were with her, for he liked music and the Westmore choir could not sing like this one.

After service, Miss Chandler showed the children the statue of Bishop Brooks outside the church and told them how good a man he was, and how people loved him so much that the whole city of Boston mourned for him when he died, even people who didn't go to his church. Long years ago he used to preach there in Trinity Church.

"We are going to do a very interesting thing this afternoon," Miss Chandler said while they were eating dinner at the College Club. The Club was only a pleasant house, and there was ice-cream for dessert, which was important.

"Will it be a surprise?" asked Dora.

“I think you will be much surprised,” said Miss Chandler.

After the ice-cream was eaten, they walked through a parkway and before long went into a large building.

Inside was a room where a lady wearing a white dress and a white cap sat at a desk. Miss Chandler told the children to sit down and she talked with this lady. A bell rang somewhere.

Presently in came another lady, dressed in the same way as the one at the desk, but she was much younger. Miss Chandler spoke to her and then came to the children.

“This is Lucy and this is Dora,” she said. “This lady is Miss Perrin, and she is going to show us something interesting.”

Miss Perrin took them into a broad hall and to an elevator which went up so slowly that the children could see on every floor they passed, more ladies dressed in white, or in blue with

white caps and aprons, and men, too, who, strange to say, wore white coats and trousers.

Dora looked inquiringly at Miss Chandler. She smiled back. There was a queer smell in the air. It smelled almost like Mr. Giddings' drug-store. Miss Perrin left the elevator and led the way to a door.

The room beyond was unlike anything the children had ever seen. The bare floor looked as though it were washed every hour, it was so *fearfully* clean! Not a picture hung on the straw-colored walls. All the woodwork was white and the table had a glass top. There were only two chairs, and *they* were white. You can never guess the rest of the furniture.

All around three sides of the room white baskets stood on tall white frames, and in every basket lay a tiny, tiny baby. A whole room full of babies and no grown people at all!

Miss Perrin went straight to the nearest

basket. "O dear!" she said. "Those doctors are so careless. They are forever coming and unpinning covers. Then these persons kick off their blankets and take cold. This one's hands are freezing."

Such a very little person to kick off blankets! But they were in a heap at the bottom of the basket and the baby was crying real tears. Dora could hardly bear to see them on its tiny cheeks and to see how pitifully its lower lip quivered. Miss Perrin took it up and laid it against her warm cheek and it stopped being pitiful. Then she tucked it in and pinned down the covers. It did not cry again.

"That is all men know about babies," said Miss Perrin. "I don't mind the doctors looking at them, but they never leave them as they find them. No man knows how to put one to bed."

Miss Perrin looked at every baby to be sure

no careless doctor had left it to kick off its covers.

“ I have a friend who is here in the hospital,” said Miss Chandler. “ I want to see her for a few minutes. Would you two like to stay with the babies? Which is Mrs. Stoddard’s baby? ”

“ This person here,” said Miss Perrin, indicating a crib. “ She is five days old.”

Lucy and Dora went to look at the friend’s baby. It was sound asleep.

While Miss Chandler went to see Mrs. Stoddard, Lucy and Dora looked at all the babies. Then Miss Perrin took them into another and much larger room. Even this big room was full of babies.

They were not sleeping in bassinets like those in the smaller room, but their beds were just as comfortable. Each one lay on a mattress in a wire basket which looked something like Mother’s dish-drainer. When a nurse

wanted a special baby, she picked it up, basket and all, and carried it off.

In the middle of the room was an odd table, with wheels and two shelves. One of the nurses was collecting wire baskets, each with a wee baby. She set the baskets side by side on the shelves of the table. When there was room for no more, she wheeled the table and the babies into the corridor.

“They are going to their mothers,” said Miss Perrin. “The mothers are in another room and it is time the babies were fed.”

“How do they know which baby belongs to which mother?” asked Dora. “There are so many that I should think they would get mixed.”

“No, they are never mixed,” said Miss Perrin. “We are careful about that, for of course each mother prefers her own baby.”

Miss Perrin lifted the blanket of the nearest

baby and showed the children a tag fastened to its dress. On the tag was a number and a name. The name was that of the mother, and the number that of her bed.

“Whenever a nurse dresses a baby,” Miss Perrin explained, “the first thing she does is to take off this tag and fasten it to the clean dress. And she mustn’t touch another baby until the first one is finished. But we also mark them in another way.”

Miss Perrin uncovered a tiny foot. On its sole was stuck a piece of cloth plaster with the mother’s name written on it.

“You see they cannot be mixed,” she said. “And, anyway, the mothers soon know their own babies.”

“Of course,” Dora agreed.

Lucy gave an exclamation. In one wire basket lay a baby, no smaller than the others, for all were small, but different, because it was

a colored baby. Its skin was black and wee bits of wool covered its head.

“Isn’t it cunning!” said Lucy. “Oh, Dora, I wish we could have it at our house.”

“So do I,” said Dora.

Miss Perrin laughed. “I guess Mother wouldn’t want you to have it,” she said. “Her name is Blanche, and she is just as good as a kitten.”

Lucy and Dora could not leave that little black baby. They liked it best of any, and when Miss Chandler came back, she found them by its basket. They talked about it all the way to Miss Chandler’s apartment, and while they were packing the suit-case.

“We have had a beautiful time, Aunt Margaret,” said Lucy, when they were ready to start for the station.

“Thank you for asking us,” said Dora. “I think Boston is a very nice place.”

“ Nice enough to live in?” asked Miss Chandler.

“ Oh, yes,” said Dora, and then she stopped. “ If I could live in two places,” she went on, after thinking a little. “ Because Westmore is home, you know.”

“ Yes, I know,” said Miss Chandler, and then she kissed Dora. “ But you will like to visit in Boston sometimes?”

“ I shall like it very much,” said Dora. “ We will always come when you invite us, Aunt Margaret. That is, if Mother says we may.”

“ I shall certainly ask you both to come again,” said Miss Chandler.

CHAPTER IX

THE KITTEN'S STORY

WHEN they reached home, both Lucy and Dora talked a great deal. They had to tell Father and Mother all the things they had seen and done in Boston. Father was especially interested in the marionettes and asked many questions about them.

Some of the questions the children could not answer, so Father said that the next time they went to the Public Library, he wished they would ask Miss Perkins for a book on marionettes. Dora said she would do so.

Uncle Dan liked to hear about the church with the beautiful picture windows and the wonderful music. He said that once he had been there to a choir festival.

After a time Father went to see Mr. Baker, and Uncle Dan took his hat and went out through the kitchen. Dora ran after him.

"Are you going to see Olive?" she asked. "Please tell her that I *love* my new ribbons. And tell her I have been in Boston and that is why I haven't said 'thank you' for them."

Uncle Dan said that he would tell Olive. Dora went back into the parlor and sat on Mother's lap.

"I must tell you about my Chinese kitten," she said. "Oh, Mother, Aunt Margaret liked the piece of birthday cake so much! She said to tell you she wished she could make cake like that. She did not have any of her own, Mother."

"Next year we will make her a birthday cake," said Mrs. Merrill, and she looked pleased. "What about the Chinese kitten?"

"First of all," Dora began, "Aunt Margaret

showed me the star she named it for. Last night it was very bright, and I can find it now for Uncle Dan. At least, I *think* I can. And then she told me about the kitten.

“When Aunt Margaret’s grandfather,” Dora went on, “was about as old as Uncle Dan, he went on a long voyage on a ship that sailed to China. When he came home, he brought with him a set of ivory chess-men. Do you know what they are, Mother?”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Merrill. “Chess is a game, played on a board with squares marked off,—a checker-board, like yours,—and a set of counters. You and Lucy have counters for your game of parchesi.”

“Yes,” said Dora, “but those are flat and round. These chess-men were different. They stood up tall, and the pieces which counted most,—the kings and queens and knights and bishops—were cats, *big* cats, made

out of ivory. And the littler pieces, the pawns, were kittens. Half the pieces were white and half were blue. There were eight blue kittens and eight white ones."

"They must have been very pretty," Mrs. Merrill agreed. "What became of them?"

"Some were lost," said Dora, "and Aunt Margaret thinks her boy cousins took the cats when they visited their grandmother. So many chess-men were gone that people couldn't play the game any more. The grandmother thought, since the boys had taken the cats, she would divide the kittens between the little girl cousins.

"She gave Aunt Margaret four kittens," Dora went on, "two blue ones and two white."

Dora stopped. Lucy was calling Timothy at the back door. Dora looked to see that Lucy was beyond hearing. Even then, she whispered the rest.

"Aunt Margaret told me that she is going to give Lucy a white kitten for Christmas. You will keep it a secret, won't you, Mother?"

"I will try to," said Mrs. Merrill. "But what with your pincushion and now this white kitten, and its being only September, I think we are getting Lucy's Christmas started early."

"I know she will like it," said Dora happily. "I told Aunt Margaret so. In the beginning the kittens didn't have anything around their necks, but Aunt Margaret took Vega to a jeweler, and had him put on a silver collar and ring, so I could wear her on my chain. Lucy's white kitten will have a collar, too. And that is why Vega sits down so hard and flat, Mother, so as not to tip over on the chess-board."

Next, Dora told Mother about the babies,

and how one had cried real tears until Miss Perrin comforted it. Lucy came back and they both talked of the little black baby.

“Would you have minded if we had brought it home?” asked Lucy.

“I should prefer a white one,” said Mother.

“But this was more unusual,” explained Lucy.

“It would be in our family,” agreed Mrs. Merrill. Then she said they must go to bed early, because, after two such exciting days, she knew they were tired.

Quite soon after Dora’s birthday, Jack Frost took out his paints and colored all the leaves. Some were yellow and some red, mixed with green. Some, he turned a faded brown. All over Westmore, the leaves began to flutter down and carpet the streets with bright spots of color.

Then one night, Jack took a look at the

flower-beds. Evidently he didn't approve of people's raising flowers in gardens; he cared only for things which grew wild. For the flowers did not become bright colors; they turned black and shriveled.

Uncle Dan cut down the tall hollyhocks which had been so pretty all summer. Many of them towered far above his head. Lucy and Dora dragged the stalks to a place where they could be burned. Some of the seeds went into their hair and some went down their necks. And hollyhock seeds tickle when they slip inside one's clothes.

Mother asked Uncle Dan to trim the rose-bushes on either side of the back door. She said she was tired of having them snatch out her hairpins every time she tried to hang up clothes. The children thought Mother was joking, but Uncle Dan cut off one long sprout and on it, there really sat a hairpin. Dora

took it straight to Mother who put it in her hair and said she was glad to see it again.

Dora read "Doctor Dolittle" through five times. Then she looked once more at every picture and returned the book to the library, just as clean and nice as when she took it. She told Miss Perkins that she liked that story best of any book she had ever read. Miss Perkins said she liked it herself. That was the reason she chose it for Dora to take to the beach.

Dora remembered to ask for the book for Father about the marionettes and she told Miss Perkins about seeing them in Boston. She was pleased to know that Miss Perkins had seen those very plays, the rabbit play and the one about Jack.

Miss Perkins found two books for Father to read about them. One was a big book and she thought it was rather heavy for Dora to carry, but Dora thought she could manage it. Once

or twice on the way home, she would rest it on a wall.

The weather grew so cool that even the big girls played games at recess. It was pleasanter to run about than to stand still and let the wind blow right through one. To stand still, it was necessary to get into a corner where the sun shone brightly and the wind couldn't come.

Miss Leger always dismissed her children before Miss Scott's room came out, and Dora would wait for Lucy. One afternoon, Miss Scott's class filed out, walking two and two across the school grounds to the sidewalk, where they broke ranks and began to skip and prance. Dora was waiting, but Lucy was not in the file.

"Where is Lucy?" she asked Dorothy Barrows.

"Miss Scott kept her after school," said Dorothy. "Lucy has been very naughty, so

naughty that we are none of us to tell what she did."

Dora felt sorry to hear this, but she could not believe that Lucy had been more than a little naughty. The other children all went home, but Dora waited in the cold wind, trying to keep warm by jumping up and down. She kept looking at the schoolhouse to see when Lucy came.

It grew later and later and Dora was afraid that Mother would worry, but she could not leave Lucy to walk home alone. Lucy would need to be comforted when she came out.

After a long time Lucy did come, and her face was swollen with crying and her eyes were red. In her hand she held a note.

When Dora saw the note, she knew that Lucy had been really naughty. Anybody who was given a note to take home had done something shocking.

Dora ran to meet Lucy and kissed her. Then she held her arm and did not say a word. Lucy began to cry again and walked slower and slower. Dora was cold and wanted to walk fast.

"What is the matter?" Dora asked when they had gone about a block. "Was Miss Scott cross to you?"

Lucy nodded and choked. She tried to speak but only cried the harder

When they reached the brown cottage, Mother was watching for them. She came and opened the door.

"Where *have* you been?" she asked. "You are very late and you know I want you always to come straight home after school."

Then Mother saw how Lucy looked. Dora began to cry also, just because she was so sorry for Lucy.

Mother took them into the warm kitchen and

asked what the matter was, but Dora did not know, and Lucy could not tell. She sobbed and held out the note. Mother read it.

Lucy cried harder than ever and so did Dora. For a minute Mother did not say anything at all. Then she told Dora to stop crying and told Lucy to go and wash her face.

When Lucy came out of the bathroom, Mother sat down in the rocker and took her in her arms. She told Dora to go into the parlor and work on the cushion for Olive.

Dora sewed until it began to grow dark, which was soon, because they had been so late coming from school. Mother never allowed her or Lucy to light the lamp on the table, so she looked out of the window and wished she could do something for Lucy.

After a time, she heard Lucy going up to their room and then Mother opened the door into the parlor. Dora ran to her at once.

"Please tell me, Mother," she asked, with her arms about Mother's waist.

Mrs. Merrill sat down and took Dora on her lap. "Lucy has done something very wrong," she said. "She didn't know how to do a problem in number-work, so she kept her book open under her desk and copied from it."

"But she is *very* sorry," said Dora, and the tears came into her eyes.

"Yes," said Mrs. Merrill. "She is so sorry that we will not say anything more to her about it. But you will never do it, will you, Dora?"

"No, Mother," said Dora earnestly. "But I don't need to, you see. I like number-work and the problems are easy for me."

"I mean in anything," said Mrs. Merrill. "It never does any good to cheat in this world, and it hurts only the one who does it."

“ I won’t, in anything,” said Dora. “ May I go and tell Lucy that I love her and that we aren’t going to say anything about it? ”

“ Yes,” said Mrs. Merrill. “ I told Lucy to lie down for a little while because she has cried so much that her head aches. It is her turn to help me get supper to-night, but if you want to, you may do it for her.”

Dora was glad to do this. She ran up-stairs and kissed Lucy and whispered in her ear, and then half-way down the stairs, she ran back and took the Chinese kitten out of the pink box where Arcturus used to live. She tucked it into Lucy’s hand.

“ Vega is very comforting to hold,” she said. “ When you come down to supper, please put her back in her pink box.”

Just then, Lucy didn’t think she should want any supper, but Dora and the kitten made her feel better, to say nothing of the talk with

Mother. When Dora called, she put Vega away and came down.

Mother had told Father and Uncle Dan not to speak of Lucy's red eyes, and they did not. Only, after supper, Father took her on his knee and talked to her a little while.

That night, after she and Dora were in bed, Lucy rolled over and cuddled close to Dora.

"I am never going to cheat again," she said. "I don't like Miss Scott and I never shall like her, but it is because of Father and Mother. They care so much about our doing what is right, that we shall just have to do it."

"Yes," said Dora, snuggling into Lucy's arms, "we mustn't be naughty when they care so much."

CHAPTER X

THE VICTORY PARK

IN most States October twelfth is a legal holiday, because long ago on that day, Columbus landed in America. He didn't know it was America; he thought it was Asia, but that was the day when he arrived.

To celebrate in honor of Columbus seemed hardly fair to children who learned in school that other explorers than Columbus came here before him. In fact, America was not named for him, anyway, but for another voyager.

But the children approved of the holiday even though the cause had become mixed during the centuries. This especial Columbus Day was to be celebrated in Westmore as none had ever been before.

Away back in June the plan was made, and all summer long, men and women had been arranging for it.

On the morning of October twelfth, when the sun rose, and everybody hoped that he would rise smiling, he would look upon a big square meadow tucked into an edge of Westmore, a pretty meadow with some large trees. Around three sides were streets. On the fourth side lay the school grounds.

When the sun set on October twelfth, if all went as expected, the last thing his astonished face would see, would be a park where the meadow had been,—the Victory Park of Westmore. The people were going to make it themselves in memory of the five Westmore boys who sailed to France at the call of duty and didn't come home again.

Judge Winslow owned the meadow and his son was one of the five who were lying in Flan-

ders with red poppies blowing in the sunshine above their graves. The Judge said that he would give the meadow to the town on one condition. The town must agree to take care of it always.

To arrange for this, the people of Westmore met in June. They voted to accept the meadow, and promised that forever and forever, they would keep it as a park.

They asked the Judge if he would like them to call it Winslow Park, but the Judge said not. Both he and Mrs. Winslow knew that Lieutenant Ned would not want the park to bear his name, when the four other Westmore boys gave their lives for their country just as truly as he did. The memorial was to be for them all. Why not call it the Victory Park?

So the town voted for this name. Mr. Lawrence, who knew how parks ought to look,

measured the meadow and drew a proper plan, showing where flower-beds should be made and shrubbery set out. The beautiful trees already in the meadow would stay just where they were. The centre of the field was to be grass, kept smooth and short. Around the edges, curving flower-beds were planned, with gravel walks where people could stroll in the cool of the evening.

At one side of the meadow stood an oak-tree and under it a large boulder. When the park was completely finished there would be on the boulder a bronze tablet, saying that the people of Westmore had made the park in memory of their five boys.

Early in the summer a copy of the plan Mr. Lawrence made was hung in the Town Hall. Beside it was tacked a large sheet of paper, divided into columns. At the head of each column stood the name of a plant or a shrub,

and the number of each Mr. Lawrence thought would be needed. Anybody who could spare that plant from his garden or who wanted to buy it for the Victory Park, wrote his name in the proper column. Long before summer was over the columns were full of names and every plant and shrub had been promised.

There were to be tulips and daffodils also in the park and these the children gave. Every child in school brought five cents to buy one bulb.

The farmers promised to lend their horses and carts and tools, and all those belonging to the town were to be ready for people to use. Mr. Harper had charge of the day's work. Everybody was to do what he directed.

To make the Victory Park would take all day, so the ladies said that at noon they would serve a lunch in the Town Hall for the workers. This would be their part.

Every person in Westmore was to have a chance to help in some way. Even the kindergarten children were planned for.

Mrs. Merrill was one of the ladies to provide the lunch. Mr. Merrill and Uncle Dan were to help dig the park. You will see what Lucy and Dora did.

On the evening of the eleventh, everybody went to bed prepared to get up early. Tools were laid ready, and also old clothes suitable for gardening.

Lucy and Dora expected to wake of themselves, but they did not have a chance. Just after six o'clock Uncle Dan opened the door of their room and shouted to them:

“In fourteen hundred ninety-two
Columbus sailed the ocean blue.
Awake, arise! though yet 'tis dark,
To-day we make our Victory Park.”

“Oh, Uncle Dan!” groaned Lucy, but Dora

sat up and looked at Dan. Then she laughed into her pillow for almost a minute.

Before eight a big crowd collected on the meadow which was to be a park before the sun set. First they sang "America." Then Mr. Harper made a little speech and reminded them why they were making the park, out of gratitude to the heroic boys who helped save the country from great peril. One of the ministers prayed that their work might be blessed for themselves, and for all the children who in years to come would play in the Victory Park.

Then everybody watched while the mothers and fathers of the five heroes each took a spade and turned one sod.

The minute that was done the work started. The people who were to plough the field brought the horses, harnessed ready to begin. Behind the plows came harrows, and behind

them men and boys with garden forks, to remove stones and shake out sods of turf.

The flower-beds had been carefully marked with stakes, and the people who were to make them ready began to dig, one set of people to each bed. Many of the young men were in their old khaki uniforms, and the young women came in overalls and bloomers in which they had been farmerettes during the war.

There was only one mix-up. The committee who were to make the gravel paths wanted to make them at once, and this interfered with the people who were trying to dig the flower-beds. Mr. Harper explained to the gravel-path people that they would really have to wait.

Grace Benson had brought her donkey. Its name was *Souris*, which is the French for a mouse, and it was all mouse-color except the black tips of its ears and tail.

Grace expected Souris to help about making the park, but what could one wee donkey do? Souris was very small, and the moment Grace led him among the people he began to shiver and shake until his harness rattled.

Nobody knew why Souris was afraid. Perhaps he did not like the big cart-horses several times larger than he; perhaps they spoke unkindly to him in horse language; at any rate, Souris stood still and shook from nose to tail. Only when Grace put her arms about his neck and spoke comfortingly to him did he stop trembling. The minute she took her arms away he began shivering again.

Clearly Souris was of no use, and Grace took him home. He looked so miserable that nobody wanted him to stay and keep on feeling unhappy, but Grace felt ashamed of him.

At first only the older people could work, because horses and machines were needed, and

there was nothing the children could do. But soon they could help.

The Boy Scouts cleaned a little brook which ran through the meadow. All proper parks have a brook or a lake, and so it was fortunate that the meadow possessed one. To plant flowers and bushes was easy, but to coax a brook to come from another place and run through the Victory Park might have been hard.

The boys took out of the brook all the tin cans which thoughtless people had thrown into it. Never again would there be tin cans in the Victory brook. They pulled out sticks and branches and took away some stones, but only those which Mr. Lawrence said were to go. Some must be left so the brook could make pretty ripples and have something over which to sing.

There were also stones in the meadow for the

children to pick up and carry to baskets on the edge of the field. As fast as filled, men emptied these baskets into tip-carts, which took the stones away. The older boys raked where directed, so as to make the earth the proper level.

The committees which had charge of the flowers dug the beds and did it very thoroughly. They dug down nearly two feet and put in fertilizer so the roots of the new plants would have plenty of food. They prepared the beds and then said that they must have water. The summer had been so dry that the plants could not grow unless the earth was made wet all around the roots.

Nobody had thought that there must be water. Mr. Harper went into the nearest house and telephoned to the fire station. The hose-cart came immediately and fastened a hose to the hydrant. Any amount of

water could be turned anywhere it was wanted.

The committee in charge of each bed had a copy of Mr. Lawrence's plan. This told them exactly how many plants and shrubs were to go in the bed and where they were to be set. When the ground was ready the head of each committee put a marker where each was to be planted.

The High School students planted the shrubs, and then came the turn of the smaller children. Each of them carried a bulb and marched in line to the flower-bed appointed.

Each one dug a little hole for his bulb and put it in with care to get it right side up. Bulbs never grow so well when they are planted with their heads down. Then a Boy Scout with a water-pot gave it a drink, and the child covered it with loam and patted it down hard.

The kindergarten children planted tulips. Dora's class planted daffodils and Lucy's class did the jonquils. Every child in the public schools had a share in making the Victory Park.

Meanwhile the ladies had been getting lunch in the Town Hall. Some of the older men who had stiff knees and couldn't work out of doors, set up the long tables and brought settees and dishes. Promptly at twelve the fire whistle blew long and loud. It wasn't for a fire at all, but the signal that everybody was to stop working and go to lunch in the Town Hall.

The park looked like nothing at all, but it did look as though there might be hope for it by sunset.

Some of the men, especially those who wore stiff collars and went into Boston every day, thought they were much too dirty to go to

lunch. They said they would go home and wash.

Mr. Harper took a megaphone and spoke through it. He asked the men not to go home. He told them to brush off the dust and loam and to wash their hands at the hydrant. Most of them laughed and did just as Mr. Harper said.

Very soon all the tables in the long hall were filled, and everybody was hungry. There is nothing like digging in the dirt to make people ready for dinner.

The good things the ladies had been cooking vanished like snow before the sun. There was cold meat of various kinds, a great many baked potatoes, string-beans, and beets, and squash. For dessert were doughnuts and pies and coffee and ice-cream.

Girls of Olive's age waited on the tables. Lucy and Dora wanted dreadfully to help, but

that was one of the things they could not do until they were older. Five hundred people sat down together at lunch in the Westmore Town Hall.

When they had finished eating, Mr. Harper made another suggestion. He asked every person at the table to pick up the dishes he had used and to carry them into the kitchen on his way out of the hall.

At this everybody laughed and the waitresses clapped their hands. For them to clear those long tables would be a great deal of work, but to clear them in Mr. Harper's way would take hardly any time at all.

Everybody picked up all the dishes he could carry and left them in the kitchen. There were still salt-shakers and bread-and-butter plates and pickle dishes to remove, but that did not take very long. And then the old men took away the tables and put the settees in

place. The hall was now ready for some other use, for a meeting or a lecture.

The children ate sandwiches made of the meat and bread which was left and they also finished the doughnuts and the ice-cream. Then people began to wash the dishes.

There were ten washers, and each had two girls to wipe for her, and it was amazing how fast those piles of dishes vanished. As soon as they were wiped, they were packed in baskets. Every church in town had loaned its crockery and silver for the Victory lunch.

By four o'clock the dishes were all washed and sorted. Each church had its own. There was one spoon which nobody claimed. And by that hour the chaos in the park was changing into order.

The patient people who were to make the gravel walks got a chance to do so. The centre of the meadow was now as smooth as a

table. The land had been ploughed, harrowed, raked, fertilized, and planted with lawn seed. Then it had been rolled with a big iron roller drawn by two horses. Where rough, uneven sod had lain was now a smooth brown level.

The flower-beds were planted and raked within an inch of their lives. All the shrubs and clumps of perennials were in place. You could imagine how beautiful the curved beds were going to look. The bulbs didn't show, being tucked underground to sleep till Spring called them. Each flower-bed was outlined with turf, put in place and pounded down.

Everybody watched the gravel paths being made. They waited until the last man raked himself out of the park. The sun's rim was nearing the horizon. There were backs that ached and hands that showed blisters, for if you are used to sitting in an office, or writing for hours at a desk, it is not easy to spend a whole

day digging dirt. Everybody was tired, but everybody was pleased and happy. The Victory Park was done!

CHAPTER XI

' HALLOWE'EN

BEFORE many days the winds finished what work Jack Frost didn't attend to himself. The leaves were neatly whisked from all the trees except the oaks and the evergreens. Oaks are cold trees. They keep most of their leaves on all winter and let them drop only when Spring sends word that she is on the way with a new gown for each. Such pretty secrets some of the trees revealed! Who suspected birds' nests until the boughs were bare?

In the gutters of the Westmore streets lay drifts of leaves through which the children loved to rustle on their way to school. The autumn air was full of the pleasant smell of their burning.

About the farms on the outskirts of town, cabbages were piled in green or purple heaps. Ears of corn dangled from barn rafters, drying for seed next year. In rows on the piazzas sat pumpkins.

Lucy and Dora greatly wanted pumpkins because in a few days it would be Hallowe'en. On that evening the Westmore children dressed up and pretended to be goblins and ghosts. Every respectable ghost lighted its way with a pumpkin lantern.

The children consulted Father. He asked Mother if the pumpkins could be made into pies after they had been lanterns. Mother thought a moment and said she could use them.

Father bought two small pumpkins. Lucy wanted to make her own lantern and so did Dora, but they found the shell much harder than they expected. Mother was so afraid they would cut themselves that she would not

let them take the sharpest kitchen knife. When Father came home from work both little girls were glad to let him help them.

Father did not find it hard to cut off the top of each pumpkin, but Mother let *him* have a sharp knife. Lucy and Dora scooped out the soft part with the seeds, and Father cut eyes and a nose and a mouth in each lantern. Lucy's had teeth with sharp points, which made it look cross, but Dora's had a smooth, curved, smiling mouth.

Mother found a bit of candle for each, and they lighted them and turned down the gas to see how they were going to look. They looked decidedly spooky.

The last day of October was windy and cold, but when the sun went down the wind went with it. This was lucky, because if it had not stopped, the policemen would not let the children build bonfires.

Directly after supper Lucy and Dora began to dress as ghosts. Each wore an old pillow-case in which Mother said they might cut holes for eyes and noses and arms. Mother tied the points so they looked like ears. She also tied tapes around their necks to make the cases fit better. Then their eye-holes would not slide about.

“I declare!” she said when they were dressed. “I wouldn’t like to meet you in the dark myself!”

Lucy and Dora jumped up and down with delight. If Mother felt that way, mere strangers would be terribly scared.

Father lighted the lanterns. He told them to be very careful not to set themselves on fire, and not to go near any burning leaves.

Mother told them not to go down into the square because big and rough boys might be out. She told them to keep in their own part

of town and to ring door-bells only where they knew the people who lived in the houses.

The children said they would remember and skipped happily away. Underneath the pillow-cases they wore warm sweaters. First they rang the Bakers' bell and Marion rushed to the door. She stopped short when she saw the two white figures with their lanterns.

"It is Lucy and Dora!" she exclaimed. "I am almost ready to come out. Which way are you going?"

They told her and ran off to make another call. The grown people in Westmore were very patient with the children that evening. They opened their doors when the bells rang and spoke pleasantly to the little ghosts. Some of them pretended to be afraid and most of them admired the sweet smile of Dora's lantern. One gentleman gave them each a chocolate cream.

"Being a spook must be hungry work," he said. Lucy and Dora told him that it was.

Only a few houses kept their porch lights burning and wouldn't give the children the fun of having the door opened for them.

Lucy and Dora went to call at Miss Page's home on the hill. Miss Page seemed to be expecting visitors, for she came to the door herself, screamed loudly and then guessed that the ghosts were Alice and Grace. The ghosts giggled and shook their heads.

"Iris and Mary," suggested Miss Page, and she did not guess Lucy and Dora until she had named all the girls in her Sunday-school class. When the ghosts took little leaps she knew she had guessed correctly.

She gave them each a wee cake with pink icing and told them not to fall down the front steps and to be careful of their lanterns.

Next to Miss Page's home stood Mr. Harper's big house.

"Let us go in here," said Lucy when they had untied the tapes on each other's masks, eaten the little cakes, and then tied the tapes again.

"Alice will be out with the others," said Dora.

"I know it, but there are some people at home. I can see her father sitting by the fire in the room where the curtain is up."

Very softly the children crept on the porch and found the electric bell. In a minute they heard steps in the hall and the porch light came on.

They did not run but stood in silence, holding their grinning lanterns. Mr. Harper opened the door and when he saw them he looked for a second and then threw his arms up into the air.

"Help, Mamma!" he shouted. "Ghosts, Mamma! Come and save me!"

Lucy and Dora couldn't help giggling. They had not expected him to act like that. They didn't think Mrs. Harper would come, but she did.

"Goodness!" she said. "What shall we do, James? Ghosts! and not an inch of mosquito netting in the house!"

This was too much for Dora. She was so interested that she forgot she was a spook.

"Don't ghosts like mosquito netting?" she asked.

"No, indeed!" said Mr. Harper. "It gives them hay fever. Harriet," he said to his wife, "how *could* you let the mosquito netting run out?"

Lucy began to think Mr. Harper was crazy, but Dora knew he wasn't. Uncle Dan talked

in just that way. She laughed and so did Mrs. Harper.

“Come in, won’t you?” asked Mr. Harper, opening the door wider.

“No, thank you,” said Lucy. “We have a great many other calls to make. But is Alice at home?”

“She is out being a goblin,” said Mrs. Harper. “I think you will find her on School Street. Could you each eat a caramel?”

The ghosts needed no second invitation. They thanked Mrs. Harper. “Do you know us?” Dora asked as they were going.

Mrs. Harper smiled. “Yes, I know you, Dora,” she said. “Mrs. Merrill’s little girls are ladies even when they wear pillow-cases.”

“What did she mean?” Dora asked Lucy as they went down the steps. Lucy didn’t know, but when they asked Mother, she seemed to understand, though she didn’t tell them.

After they had called on all the people they knew in that part of town they went to Olive's house, but she was out, having a Hallowe'en frolic herself.

Next, the children joined one of the groups in the street. It was holding hands and dancing around a bonfire. The fire was right in the centre where one street crossed another and the automobiles could not pass. The automobiles did not like it at all, but there stood Mr. Waterman, the tall policeman, and he made them all go around another block. This night belonged to the children.

Lucy and Dora danced for a time and then began to feel rather tired. The fire was dying down and Mr. Waterman yawned behind a veil of smoke.

Before they reached home they met Father, who seemed to be out for a walk. He did not *say* he was looking for them, but it was not

usual for him to walk about the streets at night unless he were going to church or to a lecture or to his lodge-meeting.

Father offered to carry their lanterns and both were willing to let him. Even small pumpkins grow heavy when carried around for an hour and a half.

The front porch was peppered with beans which boys had blown through air-guns. Mother thought it wrong for them to waste food in that way.

“Did you have any callers while we were gone?” Lucy asked.

“Yes,” said Mrs. Merrill. “Ten different ghosts have called on me. I gave each an animal cracker and they went away at once. One ghost said that elephants didn’t agree with him, so might he have a lion.”

“Did you change it for him?” asked Dora.

“I did,” said Mrs. Merrill.

CHAPTER XII

A BUSY SATURDAY

WHEN November came, an interesting thing happened to the Merrill children. There had been a number of letters from Miss Chandler. Mother and Father talked about them after the little girls were in bed. Father had taken the letters to show Mr. Thorne.

One afternoon Mother told Lucy and Dora that both were to have music lessons. Lucy was to learn to play the piano properly, not with two or three fingers the way she picked out tunes now, but with all ten fingers and according to rule. Miss Chandler and Miss Page and Mr. Thorne thought it would be nice for Dora to have a little violin.

Miss Chandler was sure that Dora could learn to play. She had a friend who had already chosen a fiddle for Dora. It wasn't full-sized, but was otherwise just what grown people used. Dora thought it was beautiful.

Alice Harper had a fiddle also, and when Mrs. Merrill spoke to Mrs. Harper about a teacher for Dora, Mrs. Harper asked Dora to come to her house every Saturday morning when Alice had her lesson, and take one from the same teacher.

Alice's teacher was a young man who came from Boston. He would be glad to have two pupils instead of one.

Lucy was to take piano lessons from Miss Ball, and also on Saturday. But Miss Ball had many pupils who wanted their lessons that day. Lucy would have to go at eight o'clock. This was a chilly hour for a music lesson, but Lucy said she did not mind. They both felt

very important with music to carry about the streets.

“ I shall expect you to practise every day,” said Mother. “ You must remember that the lessons cost money, and the money will be wasted if you don’t try hard to learn.”

Lucy and Dora felt sure they should never want to do something else instead of practising. Mrs. Merrill said she hoped they wouldn’t.

After her first lesson Dora felt quite discouraged. She had expected that Mr. Irons would show her at once how to play. Instead, he spent all the time telling her how to hold her fingers and how to keep the bow in the proper position. He would not let her draw the bow across the strings unless her fingers were just as he wanted them.

Dora tried hard, but when Mr. Irons said she had worked long enough and might listen

while Alice had her lesson, Dora decided that it would be some time before she could play that fiddle.

Alice could really play quite well, and Dora felt more cheerful when she remembered that there had been a time when Alice had to think about her fingers and the way she held the bow. If Alice could learn to do both without thinking much about it, she could learn, too. It is a long step toward learning how to do anything when one realizes that it must be done a little at a time.

When Dora reached home that Saturday, Mrs. Merrill was mixing bread and Lucy was perfectly determined to help mix it. She had washed her hands nicely and every time Mrs. Merrill looked the other way Lucy would make dabs at the bread dough.

“Lucy,” said Mrs. Merrill, “next summer I will show you how to make bread, but you

must leave this alone. You may make some gingerbread if you like."

Lucy flew for the cook-book. She knew which rule Mother used, only Mother never had to look at the book. She got out the bowl and a spoon and the flour and the molasses.

"You don't need to bring out the whole jug," said Mrs. Merrill. "Pour into a cup what the rule says."

Lucy hadn't thought of this. It was easier than carrying out the heavy jug. She did everything just as the rule said and didn't notice that Mother kept an eye on her mixing-bowl. When the gingerbread was put into a nicely buttered pan and safe in the oven, Lucy gave a sigh.

"Don't you wish you could make gingerbread?" she asked Dora, who was paring apples for Mother's pies. The Hallowe'en

pumpkins were already changed into pies and eaten.

“ I think I could make it,” said Dora.

Lucy was surprised, for Dora didn't often say things like that. “ Mother, *could* she?” she asked Mrs. Merrill.

“ Anybody who can read can use a cook-book, and anybody with common sense can cook,” said Mother.

Lucy was quite annoyed. Neither Dora nor Mother understood how choice that ginger-bread was going to be. She at once told Dora that she was paring the apples too deep.

“ It isn't good next to the skin,” said Dora, and she went on paring the apples in just the same way.

“ Don't be cross, children,” said Mrs. Merrill. “ You might help Dora with the apples, Lucy, if you think you can do them better. I

want to get everything possible done before dinner because this afternoon I mean to take you over to the city to see about your winter coats."

"Both of us?" asked the children.

"Yes," said Mrs. Merrill. "Saturday afternoon isn't a good time to go shopping, but now you are having music lessons in the morning, I can't manage it then. And I don't like to take you out of school to go."

"Are we both to have new coats?" asked Dora. She knew that Lucy was to have one, because she had outgrown her old one. It could not be buttoned without squeezing hard. Dora had expected to wear that coat herself, and she did not like its color. The color was brown.

"Yes," said Mrs. Merrill. "Lucy's old coat will do for you to wear on stormy days, but it does not look very well. She has worn

it three winters. We have decided to buy you a new one."

Dora was delighted. People in the little brown cottage thought twice before spending a dollar. Father had told the children that he was saving money so he could send them to school a long time, and was buying insurance. That meant if anything happened so Father could not work in the printing-press, there would still be money to take care of Mother and the little girls. Dora had not expected to have a new coat.

"Will it be blue, Mother?" she asked after a time. Lucy was paring apples now, and Dora didn't think it was quite fair for her to choose those with nice smooth skins and leave the specked ones for Dora to do. But she did not say anything.

"Will what be blue, child?" asked Mother. "Look at your gingerbread, Lucy."

“My coat,” said Dora. Lucy dropped her knife and flew to the oven.

How good that gingerbread did smell! It had turned into a desirable brown cake.

“Is it done, Mother?” Lucy asked.

“Try it and see,” said Mrs. Merrill. “We will look at the blue coats, Dora.”

Lucy brought from the pantry one of the clean straws Mother kept to test cake. She stuck it into her gingerbread. When she drew it out the straw felt dry and smooth.

“It is done,” she said.

Mother took the pan out of the oven. She tipped out the gingerbread and put it on a rack and covered it with a cloth. “It looks very well,” she said.

The fragrance of that gingerbread filled the whole house. It even penetrated to the parlor where Timothy was sleeping on the couch. He had no business there and he got up and came

into the kitchen. It was not because his conscience pricked him, however, but because of the gingerbread.

Lucy came back to the table where Dora was working. She was so proud of her cooking that she no longer felt cross. She took an apple which had a big speck on the side.

After dinner everybody hurried to get the dishes washed and then Mrs. Merrill and the children went to the city. There was no need to lock the house, for Mr. Merrill would be at home. The printing-press did not run on Saturday afternoons.

It was late before the shoppers came back. Dora did not wait to open the packages before telling Father that she had a pretty blue coat. Lucy had another brown one, not like her old coat, but a different shade of brown. To go with the coat was a round brown sailor hat with a ribbon hanging down the back. Dora's hat

was just like it, only dark blue, with a blue ribbon. Then Dora asked Father if he had been lonesome.

Father said he had been too busy to be lonesome. Dora wondered what he had been doing. On the floor before the Franklin stove was spread a newspaper, with chips on it, as though Father had been whittling.

Mr. Merrill looked at the new coats and hats and thought them very pretty. After supper, when they were all in the parlor, he began to whittle again.

Lucy and Dora were learning their Sunday-school lesson. Mrs. Merrill had just found out that they had not even looked at it, and she said it must be learned at once. She should be much ashamed of them if they went to Sunday school without knowing the lesson.

Dora hurried as much as she could. She read the lesson and looked up the Bible refer-

ences and tried to answer the questions. But all the time she wondered *what* Father was making. As soon as she finished she asked him.

“What do they look like?” inquired Father.

“Like little dolls, only in pieces,” said Dora.

“That’s just what they are,” said Mr. Merrill, and then he smiled at her. Dora’s eyes grew wide.

“*Father!*” she said. “Are you trying to make marionettes like those we saw in Boston? Are you really?”

“That’s what I’m trying to do,” said Mr. Merrill, and he fitted a little arm to one of his bodies. “These are just tiny ones but I thought we’d begin small and see how we come out.”

“Is it to be Jack and the Beanstalk?” asked Dora eagerly. “Do let it be that, because we know how to play it.”

“This is Jack I’m working on,” said Mr.

Merrill. "That's his mother there, not put together, but I don't know whether I can make a proper cow."

"Father!" exclaimed Lucy, "Dora had a toy cow once on wheels and the wheels were broken. Couldn't you use that cow? You could take it apart at the joints."

"I am a printer, not a butcher," said Mr. Merrill, "but I'll look at that cow, if Dora is willing we should use it."

Dora was willing. The cow belonged to her very little girlhood. She never played with it now.

Lucy ran up-stairs and found the cow. Mr. Merrill said it was the right size and would do nicely. He would try strings fastened to it in different places and perhaps they could make it walk without taking it apart or putting joints in its legs.

Dora began making plans. There could be

a set of dolls for "Cinderella," and, of course, they would need rabbits for the rabbit play. She asked Father at once if he could make some.

Mr. Merrill said he would prefer to finish the marionettes for Jack before he began any more, but he thought he could manage the rabbits. "How about clothes?" he asked. "Can you and Mother 'tend to that part?"

When they asked her, Mother looked rather doubtful. "I can make dolls' clothes," she said, "but these dolls are very small. We will try. The clothes must fit exactly right so as not to interfere with the strings to work their arms and legs."

"Perhaps we could make paper clothes," suggested Dora; "paste the paper right on."

"That might answer," said Mother, "but we will try the cloth ones. How was Jack dressed?"

The children told her and Mrs. Merrill said she would see what she could do.

Father explained that the idea was really Uncle Dan's. Dan said it would be possible to make a little stage for the marionettes and that he would make one if Father would whittle the dolls. The back of the stage was to come up high enough so that Lucy and Dora could stand behind and not be seen while they were working the little puppets. All this was to be a Christmas present from Father and Uncle Dan.

Dora and Lucy thought it the nicest gift anybody could think of. They were perfectly sure no other little girls in Westmore would have a Christmas present like it. Mr. Merrill promised that if the first marionettes turned out well he would make the characters for another play.

Lucy and Dora planned at once to give an

entertainment with the theatre and invite their Sunday-school class and Miss Page. Mrs. Merrill agreed that this would be pleasant, but she thought they would have to see how well the figures would work when they were finished, and that it might take both children a little time to learn how to pull the strings.

“ I would not invite Miss Page just yet,” she said.

CHAPTER XIII

THANKSGIVING

HAVING helped make the Victory Park, all the Westmore children felt responsible for its welfare. Any dog who imprudently walked on its flower-beds, or ran in circles on the grass-sown level, was at once called off, scolded, and slapped. Before the middle of November most of the dogs understood that the park was no place for them to play, at least when the children saw them.

At that time of year nothing could be expected to grow, but the children felt it their duty to see that nothing was dug up nor disturbed. Every child remembered the place where his bulb was planted and kept an eye on

it. When winter was gone and spring called to the flowers, those bulb beds would have frequent visitors.

All over New England November means Thanksgiving, and it did in Westmore. There were no cousins and no grandmother to come to the Merrill cottage, for Uncle John lived in far California.

Some time, Father said, when their ship came in, they would buy a little Ford, and a tent, and go to see Uncle John and Aunt Nell. But whenever Lucy and Dora asked whether the ship was coming, Father would smile and shake his head.

Still, there was to be company for dinner. Olive and her father were invited. Everybody wanted Olive, and it would not be polite to ask her without asking Mr. Gates. Olive would not come alone, because she kept house for her father. She would not go to the beach until

she arranged for him to have his meals with the people next door.

“Mother,” asked Dora on the Monday before Thanksgiving, “are we going to have a turkey?”

“Not at seventy-two cents a pound,” said Mrs. Merrill. “Even if I could afford to pay that much, I would not. I don’t think there is any need for them to cost so much.”

“Will there be a chicken?” asked Dora.

“I think we may manage that,” said Mrs. Merrill, “if they are at all reasonable in price, but we may have just a nice piece of pork or beef to roast. It isn’t *what* we have to eat that makes the Thanksgiving dinner, child. It is the being thankful for it.”

“Mr. Thorne said last Sunday that we must save all the pennies we can for the Christmas manger. Because there are children in Europe and Asia who haven’t even bread to eat.”

"I know it," said Mrs. Merrill, and she went on sewing Dora's school dress.

"I am not going to buy any more candy," said Dora. "Yesterday Uncle Dan gave me ten cents for caramels. Wouldn't you put it in your mite-box if you were I, Mother?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Merrill. "Sometimes it chokes me to have enough to eat when I think about those children. If you and Lucy and Dan are willing, we will have pork for our Thanksgiving dinner. I will ask how much more the chicken would cost. Then we will put the difference into the fund for the hungry children."

"Lucy will want to," said Dora. "Uncle Dan may want things very nice because of Olive. Perhaps he would be disappointed not to have chicken. Will you ask him, Mother?"

"Ask him yourself, child. He'll do it for you if he will for anybody."

That evening Dora asked Uncle Dan. She did not need to coax him. Uncle Dan had heard about the hungry children.

“Sure thing,” he said. “Roast pork is good enough for me.”

When Mrs. Merrill went to market she inquired the price of a large chicken. A big one would be needed for a dinner for seven people. Then she bought the pork.

When she came home she took ninety-eight cents from her purse and gave it to the children. “You may divide it between your mite-boxes,” she said.

Thanksgiving Day was cold and blustering, which made the warm house seem all the more pleasant. A cheerful fire blazed in the Franklin stove and Father was at home.

He helped make the dining-table larger. Mother put on the best table-cloth. The pattern woven into it was bunches of drooping

lilacs and Lucy and Dora thought it very pretty. Mother smoothed out every wrinkle and then the children set the table.

In the centre they put a vase of dark red chrysanthemums, cold and fragrant from the garden. Dora loved their spicy smell. They were only about as big as buttons, but something in their odor made her think of ferns and brooks and pleasant things which would come with spring.

Never was table set more carefully. Each knife and fork was laid as though the proper spot were located with a foot-rule. Dora felt that Lucy was too particular. Lucy moved almost everything Dora put in place.

When Lucy's back was turned, Dora quietly put things as they were before. And the distance either moved them was so slight that when Lucy looked back she did not notice what Dora had done.

There was to be apple-sauce, as is the custom with roast pork, but Mother had also made cranberry sauce because Father and Uncle Dan were fond of it.

Everybody would want apple-sauce, so Lucy took a spoon and filled seven glass dishes. She placed one at each plate. The cranberry sauce was in a large dish. It was to go in front of Olive, with a spoon and more glass saucers. Dora brought the dish from the pantry, holding it carefully in both hands.

What possessed Timothy just then? He liked to weave himself in and about people's feet when he was hungry, but Timmy had eaten his dinner. If he had not been fed, there would be no peace for anybody in the Merrill kitchen. Timothy was not hungry and he should have been washing his face before the parlor fire, not walking in front of Dora.

Dora tripped over him. She held on to the

dish, but spilled the cranberry on the table, all over Mother's clean Thanksgiving cloth!

"Now, see what you've done!" cried Lucy, perfectly horrified.

Poor Dora picked herself up. What cranberry wasn't on the table-cloth was on her pretty white dress.

What a dreadful thing to happen! But the worst was that Lucy spoke as though she thought Dora *meant* to do it. Would Mother think the same?

Mrs. Merrill came out of the pantry and for a moment she looked as though she didn't know what to do any more than the children. Dora stood with her lip quivering and her eyes full of tears.

"Well, that *is* too bad," said Mrs. Merrill. "Stop crying, Dora; it doesn't mend matters. Of course you didn't mean to do it."

Mrs. Merrill looked at the table-cloth.

Then she looked at Dora and looked at the clock. She unbuttoned Dora's dress.

"Take this into the shed, Lucy," she said, "and put it in one of the tubs. Go and put on your blue gingham, Dora. Hurry, both of you, for we must take off the dishes and put on another cloth."

Trying not to cry, Dora went up-stairs.

"Dora was very careless, wasn't she?" asked Lucy, coming back from the shed and helping gather up the plates and silver.

"It was an accident," said Mother with a sigh. "It might have happened to you."

All the same, Lucy had *not* spilled the apple-sauce, and she felt virtuous.

"Put that cat out," said Mrs. Merrill. "I can't have him under foot a minute longer."

Lucy put the beloved pussy into the shed and when she came back she no longer felt proud because she had not spilled things.

“Mother,” she said when the table was cleared, “I think I will put on my pink gingham.”

Mrs. Merrill looked at her.

“Because,” said Lucy, “Dora hasn’t another white dress to wear.”

“That is a good plan,” said Mother, and she smiled at Lucy.

Dora came back, rather wet about the eye-lashes. Lucy buttoned the blue dress and Dora settled the Chinese kitten in place. After all, Vega was enchanting against blue.

The stained table-cloth went into the tub with Dora’s dress. There was no time to attend to them. Mother put on another cloth, not so fine nor so pretty, but just as white.

The children set the table again and this time neither was fussy about the way the other did things. Only at intervals Dora’s lip quivered.

“Is there any more cranberry sauce?” she asked Mother.

Mrs. Merrill shook her head. “I bought only a quart of berries,” she said.

“There won’t be any for Father and Uncle Dan,” said Dora.

“They never knew there was any,” said Mrs. Merrill. “They won’t miss it at all.”

“Oh, Mother!” said Lucy, “something is wrong with the gas stove.”

Mrs. Merrill hurried to the stove. Yes, the flame was turned too high and the macaroni was scorching.

“This dinner seems possessed,” she sighed as she turned down the gas and took out the macaroni.

Just then Olive came running in with a gay greeting. She kissed the little girls and Mother, too, because it was Thanksgiving. She ran up-stairs and left her coat and

hat in the children's room. Then she flew down.

"What shall I do?" she asked. "Mash these potatoes?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Merrill. "Unless you'd rather make the gravy."

"Your gravy is better than mine," said Olive and she stuck a fork into the potatoes. They were done and she whisked them off the stove.

With Olive's coming, ill-luck went away. Nobody upset anything more, and nothing burned.

Father, Uncle Dan, and Mr. Gates came in together and Mother sent them directly into the parlor. She said it was bad enough to have a cat getting underfoot; she could not stand three men.

When they sat down to dinner, nobody could have guessed that the table had twice been com-

pletely set. If Olive noticed that this was not the best table-cloth, she didn't say anything, but of course, nobody *would* be so rude as to speak of a thing like that.

The roast pork was done to a turn. Everybody enjoyed it and was glad that it wasn't chicken. Forty-nine cents apiece, in two mite-boxes, would be quite an addition to the Christmas manger.

They sat a long time at the table, talking and enjoying the early twilight. Indeed, it was really dark when the last piece of pie was eaten and the last nut cracked.

"Now, we will do the dishes," said Mr. Merrill. "Wash or wipe, Dan?"

Mother Merrill gave a gasp and the children laughed. Sometimes, Father wiped dishes, but neither he nor Uncle Dan was ever trusted to wash them.

Uncle Dan was game. He took Mother's

apron from behind the door and put it on. He got out the dish-pan.

“Dan, you will never get those kettles clean,” said Mrs. Merrill, but she did not speak as though she *meant* him to stop. Mother was tired. She had cooked dinner and still had Dora’s dress and the table-cloth to wash.

“*I* shall wash,” said Olive, grabbing another apron. “Dan and Dad shall wipe. Molly Merrill, you may gather up the food and put it away. Mr. Merrill may scrape the dishes.”

Everybody did what Olive said. In half an hour all the kettles and dishes were clean and in place. The dish-wipers were rinsed and hung to dry and the kitchen was tidy and cosy. There was nothing to do but enjoy themselves.

Olive and Uncle Dan went out to walk. They said they needed exercise. The rest went into the parlor and sat before the open

fire. Mr. Merrill got out the marionettes and began to whittle.

Mr. Gates was much interested. He took a piece of wood and opened his own knife. He said he used to do something in that line himself.

On the edge of the open stove the children put some chestnuts to roast. Father had brought them purposely for the evening. Each nut had slits cut on one side. If this were not done, the heated nut would sometimes shoot across the room or even explode. Lucy and Dora had learned that it was best to cut the slit.

Mother brought her knitting and the children sat on the floor and watched the chestnuts and Mr. Merrill and Mr. Gates whittling.

“It is a good plan,” said Mr. Merrill, “to put into words sometimes how much we have to be thankful for. Now I am glad I have

a home and a family and a paying job. What are you thankful for, Mother?"

"For my home and my family, and yes—for my job, too," said Mother with a little laugh. "That my husband never drinks and that Dan is a good lad."

"I am thankful for my daughter," said Mr. Gates, "even though I expect to go shares in her some day."

"Your turn, Lucy," said Mr. Merrill, smiling.

"I am thankful for the marionettes you are making and for my new coat," said Lucy, after thinking half a minute.

"How about Dora?" asked Mr. Merrill.

"I am thankful for my Chinese kitten and that I had Arcturus once," said little Dora. "That I have enough to eat, not like the poor children across the sea. And that Mother doesn't scold when I spill the cranberry sauce."

CHAPTER XIV

CHRISTMAS

EVERY day in the year has the same number of hours, but some days skim past like an automobile and some creep like a snail at a gallop. The days between Thanksgiving and Christmas are of the motor-car variety. There is so much to do, and to think of, that people can scarcely believe the clock. Lucy and Dora were as busy with their plans as were the grown people.

Dora made several pretty calendars for gifts. She hemmed a duster for Miss Chandler and another for Mother. She thought Miss Chandler would find use for a duster in her three rooms, especially a cream-white one, feather-stitched all around in blue.

Mrs. Merrill suggested this gift and she

thought Dora took a good while to make it. She 'id not know that Dora made a second one, precisely like the first. She made it under Mother's very nose, and Mother never saw it. Lucy and Dora both thought this was very funny, and could not help laughing, but it never occurred to Mrs. Merrill that the duster Dora was working on was not always the same one.

On Christmas eve there was a church service. Miss Page asked her class to come early. This was an important occasion because the mite-boxes for the hungry children in other countries were to be collected.

Mr. and Mrs. Merrill were going with the children, but they would sit in the back of the church. Lucy and Dora were to sit with their class. The class was to sit in pew twenty-eight.

There had been many things to do that afternoon, and nobody looked out until they started

for church. When the door shut behind the Merrill family, everybody was surprised.

Christmas came on a moonlight night that year, but in addition to the moon, at almost every house the porch light was shining, and the ordinary electric bulbs had been unscrewed and red ones substituted. All up and down the streets shone the pretty red lights.

“Oh, Mother!” said Lucy. “I wish our house had one. But it is only gas, and none at all on the porch.”

Mrs. Merrill thought a minute. The red lights did look pretty. In the front windows of the brown cottage hung Christmas wreaths but there was no light behind them.

“Wait for me a bit,” she said, and she went back into the cottage.

Lucy and Dora wondered what she was going to do. A group of young people went by. They were singing softly and Father began to

sing with them. When Father was a young man, he used to belong to the choir.

“It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
Of angels bending near the earth,
To touch their harps of gold.”

What was Mother doing? She had lighted the lamp on the parlor table, but what was keeping her now?

“Still through the cloven skies they come,
With peaceful wings unfurled:
And still their heavenly music floats
O’er all the weary world.”

Dora looked up at the sky. The moon was so bright that only the largest stars could show to-night. There was Orion with his flaming belt and sword. Dora knew several star-groups now. She and Uncle Dan and Olive had gone out one night with a flash-light and the star-book from the Public Library and traced them. Still, Mrs. Merrill did not come.

"Father," asked Dora, "do you think angels come down to earth now?"

"If they ever come, it is at Christmas," said Father, and he went on humming the words which were now faint in the distance.

"O rest beside the weary road,
And hear the angels sing."

Suddenly the windows of the Merrill parlor turned a warm crimson. From them streamed a soft red light.

"Oh, look, Father! Look, Dora!" exclaimed Lucy. "Now, we have a red light, too!"

"I thought Mother would fix it somehow," said Mr. Merrill.

Mrs. Merrill came out while the children were still exclaiming. "How did you do it?" Dora asked.

"With Dan's red silk scarf," said Mrs. Mer-

rill, pulling on her gloves again, and looking back at the pretty light.

“ Safe against fire, Molly? ” asked Mr. Merrill. “ We wouldn’t like to go to church and come home to find the house burned.”

“ It can’t take fire,” said Mrs. Merrill.

The minute they entered the vestibule, spicy smells of spruce and evergreen greeted them. The church was warm and all the rafters were draped with festoons of green. The only light was in the chancel and what came from two big Christmas trees on either side of the chancel arch. They were strung with wee red bulbs, and at the top of each tree shone a star. Between the trees stood the manger for the gifts.

When the choir came, in place of their usual white cottas, they wore bright red ones. How Christmas-y the church did seem!

There were carols and Christmas hymns and then one by one, the classes took up their mite-

boxes and placed them in the manger. People had brought other gifts for the poor. All the children looked over their toys and selected something to go to the Children's Hospital.

Lucy chose a doll of which she was not very fond. Dora brought a set of blocks, which she liked very much. She did not often play with them now, but because she had enjoyed them so much herself, she thought children who were not very sick—just beginning to get better—might care for them.

The Christmas eve service did not last long, but it left everybody with a pleasant and peaceful feeling.

All the red lights were yet burning and almost every house had wreaths in the front windows. The children were pleased as they came near the brown cottage to hear people speak of how pretty the red lamp looked.

“ You’ll let it burn a long time, won’t you, Mother? ” begged Dora.

“ It may burn until Father and I go to bed,” said Mrs. Merrill. “ You children had better be off early, so as to give Santa Claus a chance.”

“ There is to be a surprise for *you*, to-morrow,” said Dora, and she and Lucy both giggled.

“ There will be surprises for everybody,” said Mrs. Merrill, “ but I think the biggest one will be for Dora.”

When Mother said this Dora almost flew up in the air. On any time but Christmas eve, she could not have borne the suspense. But she would know early in the morning.

Mr. Merrill unlocked the door and they all went into the cosy house. And there, on a table near the parlor door, stood a fairy Christmas tree!

It was only about eighteen inches high, planted in a flower-pot full of sand. At the top shone a silvery star, and from the star dropped webs that looked as though very large spiders had been spinning silver lace. Through the shimmery mist showed the green branches.

The tree had not been there when they went to church! The children stared in surprise and danced about the room. It was not until they had jumped around for a minute or two that they saw Mother was as surprised as anybody. She looked at the lovely tree and then at Father.

“I didn’t do it, Molly,” he said smiling.

“But you know who did,” said Mrs. Merrill.

“Cross my heart, I don’t,” declared Father.

How Lucy and Dora laughed to hear him say this. They looked again at the wee tree. Red candies were tied to its branches with sil-

ver cord, and white sugar-plums with red string. That was all the fruit it bore.

"Now, didn't you put it there yourself, Mother?" asked Mr. Merrill. "When you went back to light the lamp?"

"I didn't," said Mrs. Merrill. "It wasn't there then and I never saw it before, and the house has been locked all the time we were at church."

"It is odd how a Christmas tree could get into a locked house," agreed Mr. Merrill. "Had we better report it to the police?"

"I wouldn't go so far as that," said Mrs. Merrill. "Here's Dan. He may know."

"I was at church," protested Dan. "Didn't you see me singing in the choir in a very fancy rig?"

"Uncle Dan," said Dora, "did you ever *see* that tree before?"

"How can I tell?" said Dan. "There have

been several hundred Christmas trees in the square this past week. I don't know one from another."

Dora held him firmly. "Did you put that tree in here?" she asked.

"I did not," said Dan.

"Did you unlock the door so somebody could bring it in?" Lucy asked.

"I did not," said Dan.

The children looked at each other. Then Dora had a bright idea.

"Uncle Dan," she demanded, "did you *lend* your key to somebody while you went to church?"

"I have answered three questions and that is enough!" said Dan. And he never did answer that one.

All the family hung up their stockings. Lucy and Dora put theirs on the brass knobs either side of the open stove. Mr. and Mrs.

Merrill fastened theirs to the ends of the sofa. Uncle Dan went out again, but Dora hung his sock to the back of Mother's rocking-chair. She and Lucy took one last look at the fairy tree and went to bed.

They didn't talk and giggle more than any little sisters do on Christmas eve and they went to sleep before Mrs. Merrill expected. In less than an hour she put out the red lamp.

It was still dark when Dora woke but a great star was looking through the open window. It was so big and so bright that it seemed like the real star of Bethlehem, shining to guide the shepherds to where the little Jesus lay.

The star was so beautiful that Dora looked at it instead of wondering about her stocking. That could wait, but the star would fade with the dawn. She watched it a long time and saw the sky gradually grow lighter and the star less distinct.

Just as she was having hard work to see the star, Lucy woke. "Merry Christmas, Dora!" she exclaimed. "Let's get up and look at our stockings."

Lucy hustled down the steep stairs, but Dora opened the door of Uncle Dan's room and looked in. Only his black head showed above the blankets. The window was wide open and the room freezing cold, but Dora ran in, kissed Uncle Dan's cheek and whispered "Merry Christmas!" in his ear.

Dan woke and looked at her. "Get back to bed," he said. "You'll catch your death." And then he said, "Merry Christmas, Dora!"

When Dora reached the foot of the stairs, Mr. Merrill jumped out from behind the door to his room and gave her a big hug and a Christmas greeting.

Father came into the parlor, he *said* to make the fire burn better for the children, but

Mother came the next moment, and she didn't give *any* excuse for coming. Most mothers and fathers like to see the Christmas stockings opened.

The stockings were knobby and puffed and would be most uncomfortable to wear if they should stay that shape. Some packages were too big even to go in. These were on the floor under the stockings.

Lucy and Dora began to open the gifts, and everything they opened they liked very much.

From Mother there was a pretty woolen cap and muffler, a brown set for Lucy and a blue one for Dora. Both were much pleased, because all the girls were wearing them.

Olive gave Lucy a box of pretty handkerchiefs and Dora some writing paper with a blue M at the top. It was like some which Olive had at the beach and which Dora admired. Olive's paper was marked G.

Miss Page gave each a little New Testament. There was also from Miss Page a cunning bouquet. At a distance it looked like a bunch of flowers, but each flower was a bit of candy wrapped in oiled paper. About the bouquet was some paper lace. Both Lucy and Dora were delighted.

Lucy liked her pincushion very much. She had made for Dora a little silk bag in which to carry a purse or a handkerchief.

Uncle Dan gave each a box of candy, besides making the stage for the marionettes. The stage was finished and painted. It stood back against the parlor wall.

And as though Father were not making them a big present by whittling the puppets for the theatre, he gave them each a book. Lucy's was "When Mother Lets Us Cook."

Only the fact that she was not dressed kept Lucy from rushing into the kitchen and trying

a receipt. Besides, Mother said quite emphatically that she wasn't doing any "letting" at that hour in the morning. Later in the day, she would see about it.

What do you think was the name of Dora's book? She could scarcely believe her eyes. When she did believe them, she could not speak, only look at Father and then hug him hard.

Father had gone to the Public Library and asked Miss Perkins which book Dora liked best. Miss Perkins remembered. Indeed, it would be strange if she did not know, for Dora had borrowed the book five times since September. Father had bought her the "Story of Doctor Dolittle."

"It *was* the biggest surprise, Mother!" Dora said, when she had thanked Father again and again and looked at the pictures for about the fortieth time.

“ Oh, that isn’t the surprise,” said Mrs. Merrill.

“ It *isn’t!* ” said Dora. “ What can it be? ”

She got down from Father’s knee and took her limp stocking from the knob. In the toe was still a small package.

In the toe of hers, Lucy had just found the white Chinese kitten and was speechless with pleasure. She liked it better than Dora’s blue one.

“ Because there really are white kittens,” she said.

“ There are blue ones, too,” said Dora. “ Aunt Margaret told me so. Blue Persian cats.”

“ I don’t think they are just like yours,” said Lucy.

Dora had never seen a Persian blue, so she did not say anything. Besides, she was wondering what Miss Chandler had given her.

It was a little gold ring set with a blue stone which Mr. Merrill thought was an aquamarine.

Dora didn't care about the name, but she liked the ring exceedingly. She slipped it on her finger. It just fitted.

"This must be the big surprise," she said to Mother.

"The ring is a surprise to me," said Mrs. Merrill, "for I didn't know what was in that package. But it is not the surprise I mean."

Dora again felt her stocking and discovered a tiny wad of tissue paper. She untwisted it and her eyes and mouth both opened.

"Mother!" she exclaimed after a second, "oh, Mother! Mother! is it really Arcturus, my Arcturus? Where did he come from? Oh, Mother, my bear, my own little silver bear!"

“ You can never guess where we found him,” said Mrs. Merrill.

“ Did somebody find him at the beach? Did Uncle Dan go over again?” asked Lucy, as excited as Dora.

“ Arcturus came home from the beach when we did,” said Mrs. Merrill. “ He has been in Westmore all the time, though not in our house.”

“ Where was he?” Dora asked eagerly.

“ He was found last week,” said Mrs. Merrill, “ but I thought since it was so near Christmas he might as well come back in your stocking. You remember that I went to the church to help pack a missionary barrel?”

The children remembered perfectly. They had carried some shoes to the church to go in that barrel.

“ When we came to pack the things,” said Mrs. Merrill, “ there was that straw hat of

Olive's, the one with the pink roses. The flowers were faded, but the hat was really too good for Olive to give away, and I told her so.

"While we were turning the hat about and looking at it," Mrs. Merrill went on, "Dora's silver bear dropped out of a fold of velvet. I can't account for his getting into it, but that is where he was."

The children knew how he got there. Lucy remembered picking up Olive's hat from the sand the very morning Arcturus ran away. All the time he was hiding in the velvet, so the sifting of the sand didn't make him appear.

"Arcturus has come home!" said Dora happily. "How nice that he came on Christmas morning. I felt dreadfully when he ran away, but if he hadn't, probably I would never have had the Chinese kitten. I hope Arcturus won't be jealous of Vega."

"Mother," said Lucy, "it's your turn now. You and Father open your presents."

"Not until I am dressed," said Mrs. Merrill. "This sitting about in a kimono is chilly work."

"My feet *are* cold," Lucy admitted.

"You and Dora run and get into your clothes," said Mrs. Merrill. "Come, Father."

Dora made no motion to start. "My feet are cold, too," she said. "Father, do you think if a person had only one foot, it could possibly be so cold as two?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Mr. Merrill.

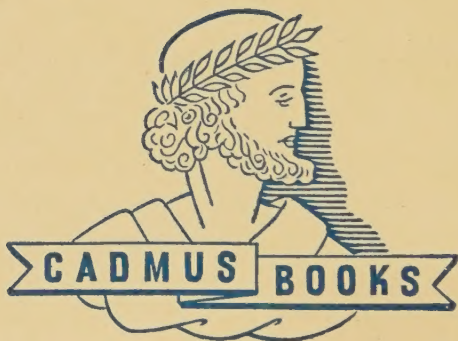
"I will ask Uncle Dan," said Dora. "And I must tell him that Arcturus has come home. How surprised he will be! I can't see how Uncle Dan can sleep on Christmas morning. I woke him once, but he must have gone to sleep again. Father, did you know that the

star of Bethlehem was shining this morning?"

"Over in the east?" asked Father Merrill.

"Yes, Dora, I saw it."

THE END



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